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(13)

NOTE OF A MEETING WITH MR PETER BARRY, IRISH MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND OFFICIALS HELD IN OLD ADMIRALTY BUILDINGS ON THURSDAY 30 MAY 1985 AT 1840 HOURS



Present:

Secretary of State

Mr Brennan

Mr A W Stephens

Mr Lyon

Mr N D Ward

Mr Donlon DFA
Mr Dorr Irish Ambassador
Mr Lillis DFA
Mr A Ward DOJ

HR Radcliffe

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The meeting was preceded by a private meeting between the Ministers (recorded separately, not to all). Initial discussion focussed on the text of the proposed press announcement, and particularly whether it should give any indication, even in broad terms, of the subjects discussed. With an oral PQ on 13 June specifically asking whether we would be discussing cross-border security with Irish Ministers, the Secretary of State believed it would prove very difficult to avoid, eventually, some revelation of subject matter but Mr Barry was adamant that, in accordance with past practice to which the Irish adhered strictly whether in the Dail or elsewhere, there should be no such disclosure. Eventually it was agreed that for the purposes of immediate briefing of the press, we should go no further than the usual reliance on anonymity under the umbrella of AIIC discussions; text of the agreed press notice attached. (Action: Mr Lyon - it would be helpful if before 13 June, the Secretary of State could see from Dail hansards, how Mr Barry does in fact handle public interrogation on Anglo-Irish affairs).

Elections

2. Referring to the District Council Elections, the Secretary of State explained that although the Sinn Fein vote was not as dramatic as has been represented in some quarters, they did now present a considerable management problem both in the Council Chamber and for government relations with Councils; Sinn Fein would undoubtedly

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exploit this to the full. HMG was resisting Unionist pressure to proscribe Sinn Fein but would continue with its present policy on contacts with Sinn Fein. Practical problems would arise and it was helpful to have received from the Irish details of how they handle such contacts. Mr Barry said that the Taoiseach had instructed Irish Ministers not to meet with cross-border delegations if they included Sinn Fein members.

Home Made Explosives

3. Mr Andrew Ward said that the studies by the IIRS experts in Dublin were nearing completion; a meeting planned for Friday 31 May might bring them to a conclusion. They would know then whether further technical research towards adulteration of the chemical compounds which were abused by the terrorists was feasible. Mr Stephens agreed that a crossroads was approaching; we hoped to digest separately the results of the Southern studies and for his Group (NIO/DOJ) to meet to consider the way ahead by the end of June.

4. The Secretary of State saw this as a crucial exercise, showing cross-border co-operation at its best, conducted out of the harmful glare of publicity. If technical progress was eventually ruled out then other difficult and unpalatable decisions could be necessary.

Paramilitary Finances

5. Mr Stephens' Group had had an initial exchange on this; although there were some features not common to both sides there was sufficient overlap to warrant continued study. This was welcomed by both sides. Mr Barry was anxious to offer full assistance by the Southern authorities and the pooling of information. The Irish felt that extortion for kidnap and bank raids in the Republic were generally under control; sequestration (see paragraph 13 below) was a good example of co-operation.

6. This provided an opportunity for the Secretary of State that the remit /of the NIO/DOJ Group might be broadened to take in also, for example, cross-border security co-operation which also needed considered examination. Mr Stephens stressed that this should not be considered a substitute to RUC/Garda contacts but more as linking together loose blocks in the overall structure. The Group might need to draw

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in other officials or departments as necessary to handle particular issues.

Kinsale Gas

7. Mr Barry raised this. Frankly the Irish had been very disappointed over the failure to reach agreement. Although there had been no signatures, the Irish believed that a formal contract had been reached from which HMG had reneged. The formula used for calculating the price of gas, linking it primarily to the international price of heavy fuel oil (HFO), had its drawbacks but now that oil prices had dropped, the calculations showed to the Irish that the project was viable and that prices fell well within the British reserve (in the original plan). The Secretary of State, although not in post at the time, said the decision to withdraw was justified; the figures had been re-examined in the consideration of alternatives to closure of the gas industry but they still did not show any economic justification to re-enter into an agreement. Leaving aside the economic analysis, the circumstances, with the decision to close and the dismantling of the Northern Ireland gas industry had changed and we had passed the point of no return despite the political advantages. PUS added that the Irish analysis of costs might still be out : the drop in coal prices had negated to a large extent the drop in HFO prices. In response to an offer from Mr Lillis, the Secretary of State said that we would be happy to take receipt of the Irish calculations on which Mr Barry had drawn, but this should not be interpreted as reopening consideration of the project; it was simply to try and clarify the confusion. The Secretary of State also offered to let the Irish have our calculations (Action: Mr Cowling).

Prison Releases

8. Mr Barry passed on nationalist's appreciation of the Secretary of State's actions in releasing lifers' and hoped that similar action could be taken over prisoners serving indeterminate sentences. The Secretary of State saw substantial advantages in such releases of carefully selected cases and he would be looking to identify suitable cases who could be released quietly without the risk of recidivism. In confidence Mr Barry was informed of the four cases involving Messrs McDonald, Neeson, Stewart and Eagan of whom the first two were republicans, where decisions to release on licence in 12 months time,

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were about to be announced. PUS explained the procedures and time-scale within which such decisions were taken; decisions in a further 10 cases were likely this year. Mr Barry hoped that we would not be deterred should any particular case prove misjudged : Nationalist families and the various support schemes would be exerting great influence on released prisoners not to upset the system.

Lackey Bridge

9. The Secretary of State reminded the meeting of the Irish offer to take appropriate security measures to avert any abuse by terrorists, but despite this goodwill the police forces on either side of the border had not yet managed to meet to discuss operational requirements. Before any decision to reinstate could be taken both sides of the argument needed detailed study, and the Secretary of State wondered whether there was a case for the NIO/DOJ Group or simply interested officials to examine the issues. The Irish side seemed surprised that there was any local difficulty: Mr Barry repeated the undertaking that the Garda would co-operate with the RUC, qualified by Mr Andrew Ward to say that the Garda would meet any reasonable security request; there must be a breakdown in communication somewhere and the Garda would be instructed to meet quickly with the RUC. The Secretary of State reaffirmed that there was no strong desire on the British part to keep the bridge closed, and if the police could agree on the appropriate practical security measures then progress towards reinstatement should be possible. It was agreed that both police forces should be asked to consult and report back to their respective Governments within two weeks (Action: Mr Coulson to take forward with RUC and report back by 14 June).

Kiltyclogher Bridge

10. Mr Barry raised this. Kiltyclogher provided the only crossing point with Co Leitrim and while there was provision for a footbridge there, he wondered whether this could not be augmented by a vehicular bridge. The Secretary of State reported progress on the new footbridge : it was under construction off-site, it would need to be installed from the Southern side and NIO officials would be consulting the DFA over these arrangements. (Mr Barry mentioned the need for Leitrim County Council to be consulted on this :Mr Coulson to take into account please). If security in the area improved the Secretary

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of State would consider proposals for a road bridge but progress should be staged, and related to experience of the footbridge.

Electricity Interconnector

11. While electricity interconnection was not necessary for generating purposes at present (there was surplus capacity both sides of the border), Mr Barry wondered whether successful reconnection of the interconnector might not be a good test of Sinn Fein's newly-acquired responsibility on the District Councils. Although economic factors could not be overlooked, the Secretary of State saw some merit in Mr Barry's suggestion and agreed that officials should pursue it (Action: Mr Cowling to co-ordinate advice please within 4 weeks).

Parades and Marches

12. This issue was very much to the fore in the minds of the Secretary of State and the Chief Constable. The Secretary of State reminded the Irish that the Chief Constable's Annual Report for 1984 had drawn attention to the resource implications of parades. This was a useful peg so far as Unionists were concerned on which to hang a general review. But resources were not the only issue: there were wider political implications arising from the provocation caused to the minority community and from the general deterioration of the standards surrounding many of the parades. But the policing and routing of parades and marches was a matter of operational judgement for the RUC and it would be difficult for Ministers to gainsay the view of local commanders on how best to act in any given circumstances. The Irish repeated their concerns over the Portadown parade and the actions of the local police there; part of the problem as they saw it was that too much emphasis was placed on local officers whose views members of the nationalist community well knew. By way of contrast, Mr Stephens was able to cite the RUC HQ's decision only last week to override local advice on a troublesome flute band march in Cookstown: this was a useful example of the RUC's earnest in this field. This led to a general clarifying discussion, for the visitors' benefit, of the procedures followed by the RUC in

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considering whether a parade should be permitted. The Secretary of State believed that the RUC was moving in the right direction; they were not pursuing a new policy. (Mr Barry suggested we might do so in relation to the "Traditional Marches") but they were adopting a stricter approach in their consideration of applications. There were indications that this approach might not be too unwelcome among the 'silent majority'.

Sequestration

13. Finally there was a brief discussion on the Irish case against Clancy and on the state of the Irish legislation. Mr Andrew Ward explained that although the Act had been allowed to lapse, this did not affect the existing case against Mr Clancy, which was subject to a constitutional challenge, and on which the Irish thought the omens of a decision in their favour to be good. Any new cases would require reactivation of the Act by Order but this posed no difficulties. Although initial reports were sketchy, it seemed that the Irish attempts to obtain co-operation from the Swiss Banking Corporation had gone well; the Swiss wished to be as helpful as they could and there was also a meeting planned between the British and Irish Embassies in Switzerland. There was agreement that this was a good example of joint co-operation.

14. The meeting, which lasted some 50 minutes, was amicable throughout.

N.D.Ward.

cc PS/S of S (B) - M
PS/Ministers (L)
PS/PUS (L&B) - M
PS/Mr Bloomfield - M Mr Coulson - M
Mr Brennan Mr Radcliffe - M
Mr A Stephens - M Mr Lyon
Mr Buxton - M Mr Cowling
Mr Ferneyhough - M Mr Reeve - M
Mr Merifield - M Mr G Hewitt - M
Mr Chesterton Miss Elliott
Mr Palmer - M Mr Bickham
Mr Jackson - M

N D WARD
3 June 1985

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PRESS NOTICE

MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
AND THE IRISH MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS ON 30 MAY 1985

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP, met the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Peter Barry TD in London on 30 May. It was one of the regular meetings between Mr Hurd and Mr Barry held under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish Inter-governmental Council.