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AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH

BÉAL FEIRSTE

Mr P. ~~Donlon~~ 36

CC ARMS ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT

BELFAST

Confidential

30 April 1996

Mr. Sean O hUiginn
Second Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division
Department of Foreign Affairs

Mr O'Brien,
to see H and
Mr (Gardesfile)
E. W.K.
1/5

Pl. cc First Secs.
Ms. O'Brien
1/5

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MR. S. DONLON	
MR. T. DALTON	

Dear Second Secretary

Dinner with Archbishop Eames

Archbishop Eames was our guest for dinner in the Secretariat last night.

We had a relaxed and informal discussion of current events which focussed, in particular, on the prospects for the all-party talks and the potential for another Twelfth showdown at Drumcree.

The following points of interest arose.

Political talks

- The Archbishop is cautiously optimistic about the prospects for a successful outcome to the all-party talks. He believes that the Unionists intend to play a serious part in them. It is important to recognise the extent to which they have already travelled down the road towards talks.
- At the same time, their concerns about decommissioning are very real and need to be

accommodated by the two Governments. They see this as the first item on the agenda and will be deeply suspicious of any efforts to reduce its status.

- We presented the full range of arguments in favour of remitting this issue to a separate format which would run in parallel with the talks. We drew the Archbishop's particular attention to the Tánaiste's presentation of this idea in his Adare speech last night and we asked for his support for this approach.
- The Unionists themselves, we noted, accept that detailed discussion of decommissioning is a matter for the two Governments and the relevant paramilitary organisations. While the two Governments have made clear that they recognise it as a priority concern, there is an equally valid concern on our part, and on that of the other parties involved, that the talks should be serious and meaningful, i.e. that the full three-stranded agenda should be tackled from the outset and should not be made hostage to a single item which is qualitatively different from all others on the table.
- James reacted positively. He hoped, however, that emphasis could be placed on the constant interaction between the separate stream and the main talks. What must be avoided is any impression that the matter is "being shunted up a siding and forgotten about". That, he suggested, would be fatal to the prospects of getting the Unionists to engage seriously in the main talks.
- He did not, on the other hand, regard Washington Three as a sensible position for the British Government to have taken. He was correspondingly pleased with the Mitchell report for its success in getting the latter off this hook - and dismayed by the Prime Minister's "rubbishing" of the report when it appeared.
- He also indicated a jaundiced view of the election/forum arrangements to which the Prime Minister's remarks on that occasion have led, but for which he himself sees no pressing need as a preliminary to all-party talks.
- He told us that he is actively "pushing" George Mitchell, for whom he has a very high regard, as the Chairman of Strand Two.
- As to the nature of the settlement which might emerge from the talks, the Archbishop revealed broad sympathy for the kind of ideas set out in the Joint Framework

Document. He underlined, however, Unionist doubts about Sinn Féin's willingness to commit itself to the consent principle on which such a settlement would be based.

On the Mates controversy, he commented that "we all knew" of these contacts (sic) but that the British Government has once again caused unnecessary trouble for itself by its lack of candour in such matters. He recalled his own ready agreement, at the request of the former Taoiseach, to reveal the secret contacts he had had with Loyalist paramilitaries in the run-up to the Joint Declaration.

As for current Loyalist paramilitary intentions, Eames is more sanguine than he was, say, two months ago that the Loyalist ceasefire will hold. He sees absolutely no possibility of a collapse for as long as IRA-violence is confined to Britain.

Trimble

We asked the Archbishop for his evaluation of David Trimble and the latter's medium and longer-term objectives.

In response, Eames made clear that he does not have the same degree of access to, or understanding of, the present UUP leader as he did in the case of his predecessor (for whom he retains great affection). Though they share a QUB legal background, Trimble is from a younger generation. He also lacks the churchgoing zeal and general approachability which first drew Eames to Molyneaux. Eames opened a reflection on Trimble's personality with the question, "How dark is the night?". He sees sectarian tendencies in the UUP leader and is inclined to attribute some of his extremist views to lengthy conditioning as an academic (i.e., non-practising) lawyer.

Trimble has sought out the Archbishop on a number of issues but as of now the relationship is not close (though Eames thought it might "grow over time"). He understands that the relationship with the Prime Minister, originally warmer, has become distinctly strained since the Scott vote and a number of difficult personal exchanges.

The Archbishop emphasised two sources of insecurity for Trimble. First, he is acutely conscious that none of his fellow MPs voted for him in the Ulster Hall last

September and that a continuing question-mark hangs over the loyalty of many of them. His main preoccupation these days is "the number of knives stuck in his back".

Second, he is threatened on the wider Unionist front not by Paisley (who is growing older and losing his touch), nor even by Robinson or Bob McCartney, but by the new Loyalist parties, who may not yet command much electoral support but who are having a considerable impact on public opinion. Eames noted in the latter respect the consistent expressions of support for UDP and PUP positions in Belfast Telegraph editorials.

Parades

The Archbishop has been working behind the scenes in Portadown with the RUC, the Orange Order, the Garvaghy Road residents and other local interests to try to avert another "siege of Drumcree" this summer.

The message he is trying to convey to the Garvaghy Road residents is that, if they can agree to a parade on a heavily qualified basis this year, there will be much better prospects for a permanent understanding with the Orangemen on an alternative route as from next year. He believes that the mood of the Order in the aftermath of last year's stand-off is not such as to permit such an understanding to be reached this year. The opening of all-party talks (and the associated political tension) is a further complicating factor this year.

What he would like the nationalists to agree to is a parade confined to local Portadown Orangemen and involving the marchers walking down Garvaghy Road four abreast (to accelerate their passage) and without music or regalia. It would be "like a funeral". He could not say, however, at what time of the day it would pass through. He hopes that the local residents, in turn, would agree to confine their objections to a silent protest on the pavement.

We pointed out that the local residents would be entirely within their rights to oppose any parade, irrespective of the conditions attached, and that this would be in keeping with the principle long espoused by the Irish Government in relation to parades (i.e. that no parade should pass through an area where it is unwelcome to a majority of the

inhabitants).

- The Archbishop accepted this fully. He would be grateful, however, for any indication we have from our own contacts of the view which the Garvaghy Road residents might take of a parade conducted on the basis he outlined.
- We asked about Trimble's involvement this year. The Archbishop said that Trimble is willing to talk to the local PP, Canon Earley, in his (Eames') presence but without either the local Jesuits or the NI Mediation Network. Eames asked Cardinal Daly to facilitate this with Canon Earley (who is elderly and extremely cautious). Nothing has come of this approach so far, however.
- He believes that Trimble is anxious to achieve some kind of compromise this year in order to demonstrate that, as UUP leader, he commands authority and influence and that this makes a difference. Notwithstanding the debt he owes to the "Spirit of Drumcree", he will want to appear responsible and statesmanlike.
- The Archbishop went on to mention information he has received that the Orange Order are planning to "seal off" Portadown, on the lines of the protest action by Roy Beggs and others at Larne last year, if they do not get their way in terms of the parade route. This would involve people from outside the town arriving discreetly a day or so in advance and "staying with relatives" - with a view to emerging at the time of the parade, if necessary, and forming human barriers at all entry points to the town (or drawing up vehicles and equipment for the same purpose).
- The intention would be to echo last year's "siege of Drumcree" by staging a "siege of Portadown" for whatever length of time it took the police to remove them from the roads. They would invite Orange lodges in other parts of the North to carry out similar protest actions. The intention would also be to evoke the possibility of another UWC-type strike. On this point, Eames indicated that he is just as concerned at the reported involvement of veterans of 1974 in the current plans as at the rumours that "the likes of Billy Wright" will be seeking a role.
- The Archbishop asked us to accept that these plans do indeed exist and that this is the background against which decisions on the parade route must be weighed. We expressed serious concern at the apparent intention on the part of supposedly law-

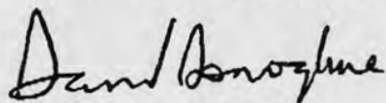
abiding Orangemen to take the law into their own hands (as Martin Smyth signalled last week and as Roy Beggs put into practice last summer). No doubt all leaders of the Unionist community will be intervening with those concerned to prevent any such protest. There can be no reward for threats of this kind and a firm line by the RUC is the only possible response to it.

The Archbishop expressed some interest in the proposal for an independent tribunal or commission. He believes that it is fundamentally unfair to saddle the RUC with sensitive route decisions (and he disowned the criticism made yesterday by one of his clergy, Bill Hoey, arising from last Sunday's Ormeau Road decision).

We set out the Government's views on this subject. Eames indicated that he would favour a three-person commission, one each from both traditions and chaired by a third, (possibly a retired judge). It might be given judicial powers in relation to a small number of controversial routes. He recognises, however, that such a mechanism could only work with the full support of both communities and that, even with this, there are a number of practical difficulties (the need for last-minute flexibility etc.).

As regards the powers available to the Secretary of State, he sees no prospects of these being used by the present British Government because of its dependence on Unionist support at Westminster.

Yours sincerely



David Donoghue
Joint Secretary