

FROM: PUS
22 JULY 1996

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B)	- B
PS/Michael Ancram (L&B)	- B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (L&B)	- B
PS/Sir David Fell	- B
Mr Thomas	- B
Mr Legge	- B
Mr Bell	- B
Mr Leach	- B
Mr Steele	- B
Mr Hill	- B
Mr Maccabe	- B
Mr Stephens	- B

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

IRISH AMBASSADOR IN LONDON

I had lunch with the Irish Ambassador in London, Ted Barrington on Friday 19 July.

2. We reviewed last Thursday's IGC. Ted Barrington thought (as a good diplomat should) that the coming together, the reasonably frank exchanges, and the renewal of engagement on the political development project, were all thoroughly to be welcomed. What did come through, however, in addition was the degree of anxiety in the Irish camp regarding British policy, and the fear that we might either have chosen to reject an IGC, or worse denounce or place in suspension the operation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and that there might have been a "seismic shift" not so much in Northern Ireland politics or the situation there but in HMG's policy stance. I drew Ted Barrington's attention to what the Prime Minister had said at Question Time last Thursday as well as what the Secretary of State had said and publicly declared in the course of Thursday's IGC and the press conference.

3. In reviewing the broader situation, we agreed that the key question is whether the Ulster Unionist Party was both capable and willing to carry forward the talks process, against the tide of anxiety, doubt and hostility that had been set flowing by the events at Drumcree on the Nationalist (and Irish Government) side.

4. I said that the question I had not heard raised in the course of last Thursday's IGC from the Irish side or any dialogue that we had had was why this intensity of Orange reaction had developed to the point of its unacceptable expression at Drumcree and around Northern Ireland in recent days. Were the Irish Government asking themselves why this should have come about, and what to do about it, as well as denouncing it (which in terms of its unlawful manifestation was entirely necessary and fair and as the

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British Government had itself done) and/or concluding that all was lost. Ted Barrington said that he had himself been asking this question not only since Drumcree but more generally and was engaged with academics at Liverpool University and others in a voyage of discovery. I commended John Dunlop's conversation and writings to him, and also left with him a copy of Archbishop Lord Eames' press statement of recent days urging some Irish and Nationalist understanding of the profound fears of the Protestant community in Northern Ireland.

5. Ted Barrington told me in confidence that the Taoiseach was paying a private visit in the course of the weekend. I said I hoped that the public disagreement between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach could now be consigned to history, given the two Government's determination to renew their joint enterprise expressed at last Thursday's IGC. Slightly to my surprise, Ted Barrington cautioned me against any ready assumption that the breach could be regarded as healed. He did not say, but I inferred, that this was less to do with the situation in Northern Ireland and the state of Nationalist opinion, than with the Taoiseach's own temperament.

6. We discussed the prospects for the talks process, agreeing that while their continuation, let alone their conclusion, was now a matter of very great difficulty, it was essential to continue the work, and if at all possible to get to the point where before the summer break the process was ready to launch in on the substantive three stranded agenda together with the decommissioning issue.

7. As to the latter, Ted Barrington simply confirmed what I think would be our own assessment that the prospects for the Mitchell compromise, and parallel decommissioning, were now much reduced if they had not indeed vanished completely. On the other hand, he did not rule out a renewed PIRA ceasefire perhaps at the end of August on the anniversary; he was aware of John Hume's efforts to broker some public statement by HMG which could be drawn to Sinn Fein's attention. I said that I saw no likelihood of any shift or easing of the British Government's position, though I did not rule out some carefully timed re-statement of the fundamentals of that position. Was the Irish Government minded to shift, I enquired; I thought I detected unease in Ted Barrington's response that the Irish Government continue to stand where it had in terms both of Ministerial contacts with Sinn Fein in the absence of a renewed ceasefire, and on the parallel decommissioning issue. I confidently expect that in the event of the prospect, let alone the actuality, of a renewed ceasefire, the Irish Government will indeed shift on the decommissioning issue.

8. Our conversation ranged over a wider terrain, including the conduct of the Irish Presidency and Anglo-Irish relations in the context of the European Union during the Irish Presidency (particularly over EMU), the Irish Presidency having to manage a

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renewed beef crisis, and the difficulty of carrying forward the slow but essential process of Irish adjustment to common defence and security interests within the European context.

9. Ted Barrington was at some pains to emphasize the generosity and ease of access he and his Embassy found in London with the British Government system, the relatively greater importance of the bilateral relationship through his Embassy compared with others in the increasingly multilateral world of the European Union, and (with perhaps surprising candour) the total subordination of all East/West relationship matters to the North/South question, despite the Taoiseach's hope to enrich and relax the stress relationship in its own right.

10. Last, Ted Barrington expressed his particular appreciation for the Secretary of State's contribution at lunch earlier in the week with his fellow EU Ambassadors. He thought both the gesture at such a busy time and the tone and thrust of the Secretary of State's remarks had been particularly appreciated by the company.

Signed

JOHN CHILCOT

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