

CONFIDENTIAL

EM DUBLIN 231130Z MAR 1981

TO IMMEDIATE F C O DESKBY 231130Z

TELEGRAM NUMBER 76 OF 23 MAR

AND TO IMMEDIATE DESKBY 231230Z MAASTRICH (FOLLOWNG FOR P S)

AND TO ROUTINE INFO N I O BELFAST AND WASHINGTON

SUNDAY TRIBUNE INTERVIEW WITH MR LENIHAN

1. THE SUNDAY TRIBUNE OF 22 MARCH CARRIED A LONG INTERVIEW WHICH LENIHAN GAVE TO THEIR POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT GERALDINE KENNEDY (COPY BY BAG). THE ARTICLE COVERS THREE MAIN POINTS: THAT THE JOINT STUDY ON POSSIBLE INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES INVOLVED NEW STRUCTURES IN NORTHERN IRELAND BETWEEN THE TWO COMMUNITIES, THAT INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES HAVE CONSTITUTIONAL IMPLICATIONS " IF PEOPLE WANT TO GO INTO THE SEMANTICS OF THE MATTER" AND FINALLY, LATER IN THE ARTICLE , THAT THERE COULD BE A FEDERAL STRUCTURE AT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE.
2. THIS ARTICLE SHOULD BE SEEN AGAINST THE REMARK MADE BY LENIHAN ON A TELEVISVON PROGRAMME ON TUESDAY NIGHT , 17 MARCH, THAT THERE WAD NO QUESTION OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND CONSTITUTION BEING DISCUSSED DURING THE PRESENT JOINT STUDIES. THIS HAS DONE A GOOD DEAL TO CLEAR THE AIR IN POLITICAL CIRCLES IN DUBLIN AND THE SUNDAY TRIBUNE ARTICLE WILL NOT DETRACT FROM IT BECAUSE IT COVERS NO NEW GROUND. THE REFERENCE TO " NEW STRUCTURES IN NORTHERN IRELAND BETWEEN THE TWO COMMUNITIES" SEEMS TO BE A WAY OF REVERSING THE IRISH GOVERNMENT'S CRITICISM OF MR ATKINS' ATTEMPTS LAST YEAR TO GET AGREEMENT ON POWER-SHARING. IN OTHER WORDS, THE IRISH GOVERNMENT WOULD NOW LIKE TO SEE SOME KIND OF DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT IN THE NORTH. IT ALSO REFLECTS HAUGHEY'S CONCEPT OF THE THREE DIMENSIONS. THE SUGGESTION THAT INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES HAVE CONSTITUTIONAL IMPLICATIONS APPEARS TO BE NO MORE THAN AN ATTEMPT TO WATER DOWN HIS CATEGORICAL STATEMENT LAST WEEK ABOUT THERE BEING NO QUESTION OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION OF NORTHERN IRELAND BEING DISCUSSED. THE REFERENCE TO A FEDERAL STRUCTURE COULD BE SEEN AS AN ATTEMPT TO TRY AND CATCH UP WITH FINE GAEL WHO PUBLISHED IN 1979 A FAIRLY COMPREHENSIVE PAPER ENTITLED " IRELAND - OUR FUTURE TOGETHER " WHICH INCIDENTALLY DISCUSSED POSSIBLE INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS. SO FAR FIANNA FAIL HAVE NO SIMILAR POLICY PAPER ON NORTHERN IRELAND AND HAVE ONLY THE H JOINT STUDIES TO REFER TO .

Mr Whitmore (2)

Mr Ingham

No 10 Duty Clerk

Mr Richards (2)

Mr Fenn

CP Budd

23/3

SO FAR FIANNA FAIL HAVE NO SIMILAR POLICY PAPER ON NORTHERN IRELAND AND HAVE ONLY THE H JOINT STUDIES TO REFER TO .

3. TO SUM UP, I DO NOT THINK THERE IS ANYTHING IN THE SUNDAY TRIBUNE ARTICLE TO SUGGEST THAT THE IRISH GOVERNMENT INTEND TO DEPART FROM THE ^{LINE} ~~ONE~~ THEY ARE TAKING WITH US IN PRIVATE FOLLOWING THE DUBLIN SUMMIT AND IN OUR JOINT STUDIES.

FIGG

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RECD AT 23/1309Z DJH



Mr Patterson

I enclose our draft
Statement with relevant
background material.

WITH

THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE
PRIVATE SECRETARY

Julie Hopkins

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

GREAT GEORGE STREET

LONDON SW1P 3AJ

DRAFT STATEMENT

Remarks attributed at the weekend to the Foreign Minister of the Government of the Republic, Mr. Brian Lenihan have given rise to confusion.

2. The joint studies commissioned by Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Haughey are intended to examine matters of common interest between the UK and the Republic and to improve relations between them. The studies have nothing to do with, nor have they touched on, nor will they touch on the internal government of Northern Ireland or its constitutional position. Both Governments and both Prime Ministers have made this clear on more than one occasion.

Sunday Tribune : 22.3.81

Basically, new institutional structures, of course, involve new structures in Northern Ireland between the two communities there in some sort of partnership government; structures ~~and~~ between North and South; and structures between Ireland and Britain. And, of course, these institutional structures do have Constitutional implications, if people want to go into the semantics of the matter. One important aspect that has to be remembered here is that the only Constitutional guarantee anybody has within the United Kingdom is the Parliament of Westminster and whatever the Parliament of Westminster passes is passed and that is that. They do not have within the UK any form of written Constitution such as we have in the Republic.

Are you now trying to say that institutional is the same as Constitutional for Britain because they do not have a written Constitution?

Well, indeed ~~if~~ that interpretation needs to be derived from it, yes. But, what I would like to say ~~is~~ more fundamentally is that what we are embarking on now is a process that may or may not lead to the sort of major Constitutional changes that are envisaged. At least the studies are now embarked upon and these studies will throw up various alternatives and options that can be used by the Heads of Government and by the two Sovereign Governments concerned and decisions taken.

Do you think that, in the future, Northern Ireland may be another Rhodesia situation for Lord Carrington?

I would hope so. I would hope that he would take a direct interest in it.

In the same way as Rhodesia?

Exactly. I have great admiration for his skill and ability.

Is it your impression from your presence at two Anglo-Irish summits as Minister for Foreign Affairs that Mrs. Thatcher would like to pull out of the North?

I do think that the British Government wants to make an accommodation. They would like to see it settled. It is obviously not in their interests to be spending over £1,200 million a year on security and all that sort of thing in the North of Ireland. It does not make sense from the British point of view to have two friendly peoples in these two islands spending enormous sums of money on security over a situation that should not be there. The North of Ireland is an artificial creation. It was set up under the Treaty of 1921 and basically it was an expediency and said to be so at the time. Most of the Unionist leaders of the time did not want it. It just happened. And it has proved to be one of the British expedients that just did not work. I think everybody knows it has not worked so we must try and work out something else.

Q Do you think that time and Mrs. Thatcher has brought the moment when Britian is considering pulling out?

Q Do you get that impression?

A Well, I get the impression that Mrs. Thatcher will, at least, try to tackle the problem. She has shown great capacity in that way in other areas and I believe she will try to tackle the problem and she has certainly pretty able people around her.

A It is interesting to note that it is only Tory Governments in Britain that have tried to tackle the matter. ~~xxxx~~ Heath did make an effort with Sunningdale. I am more confident that Tory Governments can deal with the matter in a more effective manner than Labour Governments.

Q Is it your impression from being at the Summits that "dealing with this matter" means, the end, pulling out?

A Yes, but on a graduated basis. ^{You} ~~we~~ just can't pull out unilaterally in an irresponsible manner. I am certain that the British Government won't do that. It has to be an agreed phased, graduated approach.

Q Do you think that they would now welcome an agreed phased, graduated withdrawal if they could get an accommodation with the Unionists?

A Yes. If the accommodation that you mention could be reached, that is obviously the way forward.

Q And you think they would welcome it?

A Oh, I have no doubt about that.

TEXT OF AN INTERVIEW BETWEEN MR. LENIHAN AND PHILIP WHITFIELD (B&C)

Interviewer

Are you playing with semantics on the Northern Ireland issue?

Mr. Lenihan

At this present time it does not arise but a course has been started which in due course will hopefully allow for the examination of that matter but at the present time it is not under discussion in the joint studies. The joint studies are concerned with the examination of possible institutional structures that will bring partnership between the two communities in the North of Ireland and closer association with the North of Ireland in Ireland and closer association with the island as a whole and Britain.

Interviewer

But you have not softened your approach at all in that in the long term you believe that the people of this island can come together in the new framework which would satisfy your aspiration for Irish unity.

Mr. Lenihan

Yes but in pursuing that legitimate objective I have taken into account the views of people who may not agree with me.

Interviewer

Would you accept the process that has been begun to be completed within the next 4 or 5 years?

Mr. Lenihan

Our objective is going on a timescale of that time certainly. But as I say it has to be done step by step. For this matter is long fingered too much. There is a very real danger that one could see established in the North of Ireland almost a permanent state of violence between the two extreme poles.

MR PASTOR

Statement to be issued by No. 10 in the near future sometime today,
when they will make it clear as necessary that the statement has the
full authority of No. 10.

Remarks attributed at the weekend to the Foreign Minister
of the Government of the Republic, Mr. Brian Lenihan, ~~have given~~ ^{may give}
rise to ~~confusion~~ ^{misunderstanding}.

The joint studies commissioned by Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Haughey
are intended to examine matters of common interest between the
UK and the Republic and to improve relations between ~~them~~ ^{the two countries}. The
studies have nothing to do with, nor have touched on, nor will they
touch on, the internal government of Northern Ireland or its
constitutional position. ~~Both Governments and both Prime Ministers~~ ^{The UK}
have made this clear, ~~on more than one occasion~~ ^{repeatedly}.

Amended as confirmed by No. 10 BA from
Maastricht: 12.00 23/3.