

COVERING CONFIDENTIAL

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

GREAT GEORGE STREET,

LONDON SW1P 3AJ

11 February 1981

Michael Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
London SW1

Dear Michael

I attach briefing for tomorrow's meeting in the House between the Prime Minister, Mr Atkins and Lords Brookeborough and Moyola.

Yours sincerely
Mike Hopkins

M W HOPKINS

COVERING CONFIDENTIAL

MEETING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER, THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND LORD BROOKEBOROUGH: 12 FEBRUARY 1981

BORDER SECURITY

Line to Take

1 As you know the Government shares the shock and outrage occasioned throughout Northern Ireland - and more widely - by the murders of Sir Norman Stronge and Mr James Stronge. The Chief Constable and the GOC have been looking to see where they can further sharpen and adapt their operations to reduce the scope for such attacks. Naturally, the RUC have been in touch with the Garda.

2 You also know that the RUC are taking special steps to advise and help those like yourself, in public life, who live close to the border. It is impossible to guarantee complete security in these areas but I hope that you will find their assistance of some reassurance.

3 The Police and the Army are continuing to devote a large amount of effort, manpower and other resources to the border. I know that Councillors in your own County recognise this. This concentration will be maintained for so long as the terrorist threat persists. Both the Chief Constable and the GOC are satisfied that they have enough men for the task. We shall always consider new proposals very carefully, but I am sure that our basic policy is right. We are gradually getting at the Provisionals - both their people and their arms and explosives. We shall continue to whittle away at them.

4 The Government of the Republic and the Garda are genuinely being as helpful as they can; and their Government is devoting a lot of money to improving their capabilities. The RUC are getting both the

assistance that they request and spontaneous help. The arrest and charging by the Garda of a man last week for the murder of Mr Ross Hearst in September is an example. I know that you have doubts about the extra-territorial legislation. But it is a more practicable proposition than extradition. It has at least begun to be used, and we expect it to be used further as suitable cases arise. As you know one of the joint studies which is being undertaken between the Irish and ourselves is about security. We shall be looking for consolidation and improvement.

Background

5 Lord Brookeborough has expressed concern over recent months about the Government's security policy along the border, especially in Co Fermanagh (although the security situation there is markedly better than it was twelve months ago). The principles behind it, and its implementation have been carefully rehearsed to him by both the Prime Minister (on 10 June 1980) and the Secretary of State (on 14 October 1980). There are signs that there is a growing understanding and acceptance of its soundness in Fermanagh Unionist Circles (eg in recent letters from Mr West to the Secretary of State and from the Leader of the Official Unionist Group on Fermanagh District Council to the GOC: copies are attached).

6 However Lord Brookeborough was particularly shaken by the murders of Sir Norman Stronge and Mr James Stronge, not only because they were distant cousins, / close friends, and colleagues in the Official Unionist Party, but because he and his family live in a similarly isolated position near the border in Co Fermanagh and are similarly vulnerable to attack. Since then the RUC have visited Lord Brookeborough's home (along with those of other public figures who are perhaps equally at risk)

and advised them on security precautions. It is not of course possible to offer police protection to all who might conceivably be at risk.

7 Apart from touching on his personal predicament Lord Brookeborough may well return to long-standing suggestions of his for improving border security, viz the closure of more border roads (of which about one half in Fermanagh are already closed) and the need for greater cooperation from the Government of the Republic and the Garda. On the question of political will, the Prime Minister can point to the joint study on security. On practical cooperation from the Garda, numerous arms and ammunition finds in 1980, plus the recent charging of 2 men in the Republic for the murders of Mr William Elliott on 28 June 1980 and Mr Ross Hearst (both from Co Armagh) on 4 September 1980, demonstrate the results which they are achieving. The extra-territorial jurisdiction was at least invoked by the Irish in one case last year (albeit unsuccessfully), and the Hearst case is another. This is some further measure of progress on security cooperation.

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS

Line to Take

1 The future of Northern Ireland is for Parliament and the people of Northern Ireland. Section 1 of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 is clear on that. Mr Haughey accepts that there can be no change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority of the people there.

2 The development of the unique relationship and the joint studies in no way puts Northern Ireland's place within the United Kingdom at risk. There is no question of a "sell-out".

3 Speculation that "institutional arrangements" could have sinister implications for Northern Ireland is unfounded. What we are considering is the kind of special arrangements between the United Kingdom as a whole and the Republic that might be mutually beneficial. As part of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland stands to gain from any new arrangements.

4 The Government is fully aware of Unionist sensitivities. But it is ridiculous to build these up into notions of conspiracy and betrayal. It is also highly irresponsible.

Background

5 In a personal letter of 27 January to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Lord Brookeborough warned of the "extreme distrust" in Northern Ireland following the meeting in Dublin on 8 December and stressed the importance of reassuring Unionists about Northern Ireland's future. Mr Atkins in his reply of 6 February

drew attention to the communique following the meeting between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach on 21 May 1980 which recorded the Prime Minister's and the Taoiseach's agreement that any change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland.

6 Lord Brookeborough also suggested that there should be a Minister "of known unionist affiliations to be able to refute with authority the statements of John Hume and the Taoiseach". Mr Atkins replied that Ministerial appointments were entirely a matter for the Prime Minister.

7 In general, Lord Brookeborough's position has been that he personally appreciates the Government's objectives and bona fides over the joint studies, but is sceptical of their ability to overcome Unionist fears and objections.

8 Lord Moyola yesterday spoke out strongly against Dr Paisley's activities. A copy of the relevant Irish Times extract is attached.

IRISH TIMES

11 - 2 - 1981

Former NI Premier warns over Paisley

LORD MOYOLA, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland for two years from May 1st, 1969, last night strongly criticised the Rev. Ian Paisley's recent actions as "a great deal more dangerous" than the Dublin summit.

He said: "It's been denied endlessly that nothing has been sold out, whereas, if one looks at what is now projected, private armies, demonstrations and so on, we know not what, this is going to have a terrible effect on people in the UK, who are already, after all, spending a fortune here on paying for keeping the security forces here, compensation, soldiers losing their lives, and so on."

Lord Moyola was asked in a BBC interview whether he thought Unionist unity was as important today as when he had won the position of Prime Minister by one vote from Mr Brian Faulkner.

He said: "I'm not entirely certain as to whether it should or shouldn't be in this situation. My personal view is that the propositions which Paisley is now uttering are probably going to put the whole future of this country in a great deal of risk. And I think that maybe the Official Unionist Party thinks the same as I do, and maybe that is why their approach is cautious."

Paisley's actions were "a great deal more dangerous because we're really living with an assumption that something has been sold out with these various teams of civil servants. This had been denied endlessly."

Asked about the possible effect on people in the rest of the UK of

Mr Paisley's actions and statements, Lord Moyola said: "It's quite on the cards that it might have the effect that they'll say, if Northern Ireland people wish to flout the authority of the British Parliament and have confrontations or whatever, well it's time we got rid of them, and I think this is a very real possibility. We need friends in England and by proceeding in this way we are probably going to lose a great many. And the stakes are very serious because that ends us up in independence. Now that's going to be paid for — whether any industry ever comes here again, or whether a lot won't go."

NEEDING FRIENDS

Lord Moyola said he hoped the British Government would not issue a threat to break the link, "because it would only inflame the situation, but I think it's something that all sensible people in Northern Ireland ought to keep at the back of their minds, that if we want to stay part of the UK the best thing we can do is keep friends within the UK and keep good friendly relations with everybody."

Asked if he himself would sign Mr Paisley's covenant, Lord Moyola replied: "Frankly, I haven't give it a good deal of thought, but I am not happy about signing something over which I have no control. We may be pitched into some sort of confrontations at his behest and then be expected, by having signed this thing, to support him in something that many of us may think is entirely wrong."