

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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23rd September, 1981.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE GOVERNMENT

Northern Ireland Policy Review Conference, Dublin, 24-25 August, 1981

1. A conference to review policy on Northern Ireland, was held in Iv  
House, Dublin on 24-25 August, 1981. The Conference was attended by  
Taoiseach, the Tanaiste (part of Conference only), the Minister-design  
for Foreign Affairs, the Attorney General, the Special Adviser to the  
Government and senior officials of the Departments of the Taoiseach a  
of Foreign Affairs.

2. The background to the Joint Studies initiated at the meeting betw  
the former Taoiseach and the British Prime Minister in Dublin in Dece  
1980, was outlined. It was indicated that the prospects of a  
Conference involving Britain and Ireland had been considered in advan  
of that meeting but with no particular optimism on the Irish side tha  
such a Conference would take place. In the event the Joint Studies  
were the outcome of the meeting. One element in the underlying think  
was the probable British interest in being in Northern Ireland for  
strategic reasons. Part of our purpose had been to provide a framewo  
in which they could obtain adequate assurance that these security  
interests would not be prejudiced by progress towards Irish unity. A  
further point was that sufficient movement should be seen to be takin  
place to enable the Government here at some point to call successfull  
on the men of violence to halt their activities as being irrelevant

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to the process being engaged in.

3. It had been envisaged that the Anglo-Irish Council contemplated in the Joint Studies might, over time and subject to fundamental changes of attitude on the part of those involved, lead to a radical change of approach which could open up possibilities for a settlement of the Northern Ireland problem. Some of these changes, as the Taoiseach now sees it, might involve

- more effective security throughout Ireland, possibly including such matters as an All-Ireland Court,
- action on an All-Ireland basis directed to the reconstruction of the devastated Northern Ireland economy involving, for example, political stability, an attractive tax package, a suitable currency regime,
- working out an acceptable constitution for an All-Ireland political entity, and
- promoting closer relations between Ireland and Britain.

4. It was noted that whatever about longer term objectives, the British, while being generally helpful and constructive, had since December 1980 tended to take a minimalist attitude within the context of the Joint Studies: and further that work on the studies was and continues to be subject to the strictest conditions as to confidentiality.

5. The Taoiseach wishes to indicate for the information of his colleagues in Government the conclusions of the Conference, which are appended to this memorandum. He proposes that, subject to their views the general lines of action set out in the conclusions should be followed.

Appendix

SECRET

Northern Ireland Policy Review Conference

Iveagh House, Dublin

24th-25th August, 1981

Approved by the Taoiseach on 27 August, 1981

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At a meeting attended by the Taoiseach, Tanaiste, Minister-Designate for Foreign Affairs, Attorney General and officials, it was decided:

- (1) (i) that efforts should immediately be initiated to establish or re-establish contact, at political level, with Unionists in Northern Ireland, including both political figures and other leaders of public opinion.
  - (ii) that work should be pressed forward on an examination of ways of awakening Unionist interest in closer relations with this State, possible including involvement in structures flowing from the joint studies process. The examination should cover the question of All-Ireland Courts, making more effective the operation of the criminal law jurisdiction legislation, a choice (between Irish and British missions) of Northern Ireland representation abroad, I.D.A. promotion of Northern Ireland (subject to political progress) etc.
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- (2) (i) that proposals for a constitutional review should be initiated by the Attorney General, bearing in mind

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- the joint studies process, with a view to a submission to Government;
- (ii) that a paper on a programme of education and persuasion on attitudes to unification (legitimacy) should be prepared by the Special Adviser to the Government for consideration by the Taoiseach;
- (3) that work with the Joint Studies should proceed cautiously;
- (4) that at the forthcoming meeting with the British Prime Minister, to be sought for a date in the second half of October, the Taoiseach should discuss with her progress with the joint studies and the possibilities for the development of the potential of the exercise. It was agreed that the extent to which the content of the studies would be released and the timing to be followed should be considered further;
- (5) that a paper should be prepared summarising arguments for and against independence for Northern Ireland, including discussion of the extent and components of the British subvention;
- (6) that a paper should be prepared on options for the permanent solutions we desire,
- (i) in anticipation of timing being right (in 1982? 1983?) and
  - (ii) with particular reference to the question of whether such a solution should or would have to embrace a strong regional administration in Northern Ireland

and consequently whether we should or should not seek or support the establishment of such a government there in the short term.

27th August, 1981.