

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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Agenda for Anglo-Irish Policy Review Conference

1veagh House, Dublin

24th - 25th August 1981

Note At the conclusion of each particular session, conclusions should be drawn as to the follow up action that can and should be taken.

Item 1: Government Policy and its Objectives:

The Taoiseach will open the conference with introductory remarks on the purpose of the conference. This will be followed by initial contributions from participants designed to ensure that all relevant issues are brought into consideration in the subsequent structured discussion.

Item 2: The Role of the British Government:

- Assess present British attitudes, objectives and time-scales (as we see them) in Northern Ireland and their overall objectives in short and long-term in the field of Anglo-Irish relations. How much significance attaches to defence considerations in the British mind? Try to identify what the British want of us.
- Isolate the critical differences between British and Irish objectives. Can these differences be resolved or bridged and if so, how?
- Assess the possibility of change in current British attitude. Mrs. Thatcher, her prospects for survival, the British economy, next election, etc. Are there any factors at all which would induce her to change her line/share our concern? Would an alternative Tory leadership significantly change the picture?

- Assuming a Labour Government in London, what would the prospects be (under Foot, Healey, Benn ?) Consider the performance of previous Labour Administrations. How important is the NEC document on Northern Ireland and what difference would it make if the document were adopted at the next annual conference (October).
- The Liberal/SDP Alliance: is it a serious threat to the established major parties?
- Consider British public opinion and the role of the media and their potential for influencing Government policy.

Item 3: Northern Ireland - People and Parties:

- The Majority Opinion: describe its relative strengths and weaknesses, as expressed through the various Unionist parties. What are the differences between these parties? How do they perceive us? What are the prospects for rapprochement inside Northern Ireland and between North and South? What is the state of relations between Unionists generally and the British?
- The Minority Opinion: assess its current state, constitutional politics versus paramilitarism. The role of the SDLP. Where does the minority go from here?
- The British involvement in attempting to devolve government in Northern Ireland ("internal options"). The failure of all attempts up to and including the Advisory Council proposal. Do the British really want devolved government there? Or is direct rule to continue indefinitely?
- Possible role of referendum, or other approaches, in establishment of new institutions broadly within the present context.

Item 4: What can be done in the Republic to promote progress towards our objectives?

- constitutional changes
- legal and related changes
- economic cooperation beneficial to the North
- security cooperation

Item 5: A detailed assessment of the Joint Studies Process:

- Does this process in fact correspond to Government objectives?
- (Bearing in mind the current status of the JS papers, viz that they are without prejudice to either side) - consider the achievements to date in the process. Consider each of the five areas of study. Devote careful attention to the Institutions Study, being the pivotal area. As it is presently elaborated, should we hold onto the Anglo-Irish Council believing that it might eventually be a vehicle for constitutional change in Northern Ireland and how could it become such a vehicle? Short of constitutional change, is the notion worth preserving in the hope that British policy (or British Government) might change? How can the Council be presented as representing progress on the North/South issue without revealing our hopes in a manner that could alienate Unionist opinion - and if it can't, how can we prevent its being seen in a negative light by our public opinion with its anti-British bias? Should the process be radically overhauled or even abandoned? And if abandoned, how? Does abandonment mean that some form of vacuum would exist in Anglo-Irish relations, and how would that vacuum be filled? What alternatives exist to the Joint

Studies process in present circumstances? What has been the impact of this process on Unionists? Can they effectively be involved? How can they and representatives of the minority be brought in and who would represent them on an Anglo-Irish Council if there continued to be no Northern Ireland Executive? Is there any way in which Unionist opinion could be re-orientated towards Confederation by the emergence of the condominium concept from the British side?

Item 6: The American Dimension:

(Discussion might be based on the themes set out in Ambassador Donlon's preliminary paper which is available to participants).

Item 7: The European and other International contexts:

- The EEC: the role of the Commission in the Northern Ireland social and economic fields and in the North-South context. The role of the Parliament. Are there any possibilities in the EPC framework?
- The UN: does it have any role? If so, what?
- Bilaterally: assess the perception of Irish policy in selected countries, notably in France and the FRG (and some other European and Commonwealth States).
- Against this background, consider the relative merits of any attempt to "internationalise" the Northern Ireland situation.
- Are there ways in which we might try to improve foreign understanding of our position? Should we, for instance, consider having a national news agency or an overseas broadcasting system (radio)?

Item 8: Adoption of Conclusions:

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List of Participants

An Taoiseach, Dr. G. FitzGerald, T.D.

An Tánaiste, Mr. Michael O'Leary T.D.

Minister-Designate for Foreign Affairs, Professor J. Dooge

The Attorney-General, Mr. Peter Sutherland, S.C.

Special Adviser to the Government, *Mr.* Alexis FitzGerald

The Secretary to the Government, Mr. Dermot Nally

Department of the Taoiseach : Mr. W. Kirwan
Mr. M. Lillis
Mr. L. Hourican

Department of Foreign Affairs: Mr. A. O'Rourke, Secretary
Ambassador Kennedy, London
Ambassador Donlon, Washington
Ambassador N. Dorr, United Nations
(New York)
Mr. D. Neligan
Mr. S. Whelan
Mr. M. Burke
Mr. D. O'Ceallaigh, Embassy London