

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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STRICTLY CONFIDENTIALNorthern Ireland Review Meeting.

1. A meeting to review all aspects of the Northern Ireland situation was held in the Taoiseach's Office in Leinster House on Wednesday the 7th of April, 1982. The Taoiseach, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Justice, and the Attorney General were present together with officials from the Departments of the Taoiseach, Foreign Affairs, Justice and the Office of the Attorney General. This report summarises the outcome of the meeting.

2. Political Situation

The meeting reviewed the elements in and affecting the current political situation in Northern Ireland with particular reference to political crisis in London arising from the Falkland Islands dispute and the British Government's White Paper on Devolution. It was noted that British attitudes could be affected by the position of the Prime Minister: her standing and future were assessed against the background of developments in the Falklands dispute. The attitudes of the various political parties in Northern Ireland to the current proposals were discussed. The view was expressed that the OUP, DUP and the Alliance Parties would definitely participate in an election for a new Assembly but with different motives. The SDLP would be holding a special meeting on the 17th of April to decide their attitude. One view from an SDLP source suggested that the Party would participate in an election on the basis of joining the Parliamentary tier but boycotting the Assembly structure. Another view was that the Party might decide not to contest an election. It was suggested that a further meeting with the SDLP should be arranged for Friday, 16th inst.

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3. Following discussion of various aspects of the initiative there was confirmation of the view that the Government should maintain their attitude to the initiative, i.e. that it was unworkable and did not focus sufficiently on the broader dimensions of the problem. The Government would continue to press for development of the Anglo-Irish process and in particular the establishment of an Anglo-Irish Parliamentary institution in which Northern Ireland representatives could participate.

#### 4. Security

The meeting was informed that North/South security co-operation was operating effectively and that this was acknowledged by both the RUC and the British Army. Reference was made to the pressure which had come from the British authorities last year in relation to the problem of fugitive offenders particularly following the spate of murders culminating in the assassination of the Reverend Robert Bradford, M.P. This was the background to the demands for measures such as joint interrogation. It was stated that while the numbers involved in actual terrorist attacks were small they could be very effective from time to time and would probably continue to be so despite the best efforts of the security forces. There was no serious doubt that subversive groups had mounted attacks across the border from our jurisdiction.

#### 5. Meetings of Irish and UK Attorneys General and their Officials

The Attorney General reported on the meeting which his predecessor had with the British Attorney General and also on contacts at official level in this regard. Three subjects had been discussed - extradition, joint interrogation and the concept of an all-Ireland court.

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Extradition The former Attorney General had adopted in his discussion with his British counterpart the traditional attitude of the Irish side in discussion on this subject. The Attorney recommended that the attitude taken by successive Irish Governments should be maintained.

Joint Interrogation There were objections to this on at least three grounds. Firstly, the Gardai were concerned that attacks would be mounted on any Garda station in which RUC officers might be present. Secondly, the Gardai believed that local sources of information in border areas might dry up if this provision were introduced. Thirdly, there was the question of admissibility in the courts of statements taken in Garda stations where RUC personnel might be involved.

All-Ireland Court The Attorney General was of the opinion that the proposal considered in this regard was a cumbersome arrangement, the merits of which in terms of securing more convictions of fugitive offenders were, in his view, rather dubious. There were particular difficulties as regards the question of whether a right of appeal would lie.

6. The Attorney went on to refer to the fact that the British side had requested that the talks on these subjects should be expanded despite the fact that it had been agreed at the outset that the discussions would be strictly on a lawyer to lawyer, technician to technician basis concerned only with the technical merits and feasibility of the various ideas that might be put forward and that nothing said in them would imply any commitment on the part of either Government to adopt any particular course that might be discussed. The view was expressed that it would be totally inappropriate to have the Attorneys General presiding over a conference involving representatives of other Departments. A further view was expressed that the discussions in themselves

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had been useful in clarifying our position on the various matters raised with the British side.

7. The Attorney General reviewed certain developments in international jurisprudence which might open up the possibility that an amendment to our extradition laws, in order to restrict the ambit of the political exception, might be technically feasible. Reference was also made to relevant aspects of a recent judgement by Judge Henchy. The Attorney commented that the Irish side might find it difficult in a technical discussion to dismiss this option but that this outcome might be politically embarrassing. The Taoiseach agreed that the Irish side could be wrong-footed in this regard and remarked that extradition was an explosive issue. Following further discussion it was agreed, on the recommendation of the Attorney General, that for the present, our position should be that we should do nothing more in this regard; that we could say that the Attorneys and their officials had met and had a useful exchange of views; and that there the matter should rest. If, however, there was a demand from the British side for a further meeting between officials of the offices of the two Attorneys General, in advance of the Summit there would be no objections to such a meeting, which would consider only the difficulties involved so far as we were concerned and avoid considerations of the policy issues.

## 8. Anglo-Irish Encounter Organisation

The meeting considered some of the potential advantages and disadvantages of this proposed organisation. The discussion advert the danger that it might become a forum for criticism of the Government of the day or perhaps another pressure group. On the other hand, if the right people were involved and its activities suitably tailored it could provide a forum in which Unionist political, business and grassroots interests could participate in a manner which could strengthen their perception of the

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benefits flowing from all-Ireland approaches. It was agreed that the matter should be further reviewed.

## 9. Economic Co-operation

The Taoiseach referred to his recent meeting with the Harland and Wolff delegation. He had found the Belfast group to be mature, articulate, well informed and well briefed. They were moderate in their approach and kept emphasising the contribution to the welfare of both parts of the country which their industry could provide. Arrangements have been made for representatives of a number of semi-State bodies to go to Belfast to assess what orders or preferences we could place with the Yard.

10. Reference was also made to the economic projections contained in the recent Coopers and Lybrand report on the Northern Ireland economic situation (unemployment now running at 20% but could on the basis of a pessimistic scenario be as high as 30% by the end of the decade). Reference was made to the need for an early meeting at Ministerial level on the possible supply of Kinsale gas to Northern Ireland with particular reference to reaching an agreement on price. The possibility of further North/South economic co-operation in the fields of agriculture, industry and tourism with particular reference to promotion of an integrated approach for the whole country was raised. Progress in these areas in Northern Ireland would depend crucially on political progress and ultimate stability: movement in the political and economic spheres would have to become more inter-related. It was accepted that Irish efforts in this area should be co-ordinated within the framework of a Programme of Action under the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council.

11. At the conclusion of the meeting the following policy guidelines emerged:-

- the Government would maintain the attitude previously

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expressed to the Secretary of State's White Paper.

- the Government would pursue the development of the Anglo-Irish process and press for the establishment of the Parliamentary tier.
- full-scale security co-operation would be continued: it was recognised that this was most important at the practical or operational level.
- a higher priority to be given to all aspects of economic co-operation, with particular reference to areas where Unionist perception of the benefits of all-Ireland approaches could be enhanced.

8th April, 1982.

Northern Ireland Review Meeting

Wednesday, 7th April, 1982.

List of Participants.

Taoiseach

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Minister for Justice

Attorney General

Secretary to the Government

Secretary, Department of Justice

Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs

Mr. D. Quigley, Senior Legal Assistant, Attorney General's Office

Ambassador E. Kennedy

Mr. M. Donnelly, Assistant Secretary, Department of Justice

Mr. D. Neligan, Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs

Mr. W. Kirwan, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach

Dr. M. Mansergh, Special Adviser, Department of the Taoiseach

Mr. F. Murray, Department of the Taoiseach

Mr. M. Burke, Department of Foreign Affairs