

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



<b>Reference Code:</b>	2013/100/1097
<b>Creation Date(s):</b>	5 October 1983
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	3 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of the Taoiseach
<b>Access Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

SECRET

Minister,

1. A/Sec Lillis has sent you a memo dated 29 September 1983 outlining a possible approach to Mrs. Thatcher. I agree in general with his analysis of the current situation the main features of which are

- the alienation of nationalists in NI from the democratic process continues;
- there is no substantive, political dialogue taking place between unionism and nationalism;
- the New Ireland Forum is sitting;
- Mrs. Thatcher is a unionist and in any event believes that any tinkering with NI is likely to worsen rather than improve the situation;
- friends of Irish nationalism in the U.S. and within the EC are coming to the view that our cause is a hopeless one and they are in danger of being subtly but effectively neutralised by the British.

2. The line of approach suggested by A/Sec Lillis is not as convincing as the analysis. Specifically, I am of the view that (a) neither the public nor private theme of the November Summit should be "normalisation" (b) the time is not yet ripe publicly to define the Irish nationalist objective as joint sovereignty and (c) the implications of the "bottom-up" approach to joint sovereignty, involving a Dublin role in NI security with or without a substantive acceptance by us of the formal constitutional position of NI, need to be examined much more carefully before there is further discussion of the idea with the British at any level.

3. There is a tendency in London to assume that only Fianna Fáil Governments need be taken seriously when it comes to discussing the constitutional position of NI. (In a recent conversation with A/Sec Lillis, Goodall of the British Cabinet Office talked about seeking from the Government a constitutional concession which "could not be repudiated by another Irish Government". Such a suggestion would hardly have been made to a Fianna Fáil Government!). To talk about normalising Anglo-Irish relations at a time when the fundamental disagreement between Dublin and London remains and when the NI situation - the cause of that disagreement - is clearly worsening is likely to confirm the British tendency to believe that, whatever this Government might say, it really does not expect to have any significant impact on Britain's NI policy.

.../

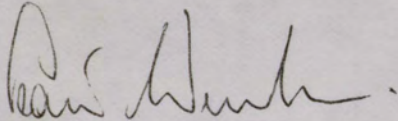
4. The main reason for the view that this is not the time to go for joint sovereignty as the Government's policy objective is that the New Ireland Forum is sitting. Obviously whatever policy objective is eventually adopted, it will have a better chance of being achieved if it is backed by a nationalist consensus. As long as there is any possibility of achieving a consensus, there would seem little point in the Government's defining its policy objective, especially when that objective might prove to be domestically controversial.

5. A/Sec Lillis has outlined in para. 20 of his memo the political gains which Irish nationalism would derive from the acceptance by Britain and Ireland of an approach to joint sovereignty from the bottom up. He envisages a full and equal Dublin role in NI security (army, prisons and police) and in the judiciary and he goes on to say that these are the areas where the British are most willing either to co-operate or to have discussions with us. It would appear to me that, on the contrary, the handling of security in NI is something the British have never been prepared to discuss with us in any serious way. Their interest has been and remains in getting us to do in this state whatever is required to minimise the security difficulties in NI. Because it is the correct thing to do and because of the need to secure the interests of the state, most Irish Governments have over the past twelve years spared no effort on the security front, even when part of the problem we are dealing with might have been avoided by a more sensible British security approach in NI. Even if the British might at this stage be persuaded to give us a joint rôle in NI security; it might be seen by many people, north and south, as a continuation of the security oriented approach to the NI problem. To gain acceptance for the principle of public authority in NI requires, it is suggested, a joint approach to more than security questions. The NI minority, in particular, would need to see joint British/Irish involvement in dealing with the pressing problems in education, housing, unemployment, flags/emblems, EC affairs, etc.

6. In the months ahead, I would be inclined to suggest an approach to Anglo-Irish relations somewhat different to that suggested in the paper prepared by A/Sec Lillis. Assuming that the Government's policy objective in Anglo-Irish relations cannot be defined until the Forum's report is ready, it is suggested that the next few months should be used

- (a) to impress on the British Prime Minister the fact that the essentially unilateral British approach to the NI situation over the past ten years has not worked;
- (b) to point out the direct and indirect cost to us of a continuation of the present NI situation;
- (c) to explain that the Forum is a major attempt by Irish nationalists to take a fresh look at the problem;
- (d) to ask that the British Government embark on a similar exercise so that both sides will be prepared for substantive talks at the next Anglo-Irish summit.

Irrespective of Mrs. Thatcher's attitude to the above approach, the time would appear ripe to make the same points to a wider public, especially in the centres of influence on British policy, with a view to creating an atmosphere which might encourage the British Government at least to put Ireland on its agenda.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul Hume".

Secretary  
5 October, 1983