



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Belfast, 28 January, 1992

OVERVIEW NOTE

(As of Monday 27th January)

Organisational aspects

1. The Conference begins at 10:00 a.m. or thereabouts (depending on Ministers' arrival). It is hoped that the meeting can be concluded at 1:00 p.m., enabling Ministers to depart after lunch and a press conference. It will follow the usual pattern of tete-a-tete, restricted session and plenary. The agenda is attached (some secondary items may be dealt with very briefly or postponed).

MAIN POINTS

2. The main focus of the meeting will be the prospects for political talks, but confidence issues (Nelson case) and seCurity (Teebane massacre and other bombs) will also be topical.

Political Talks

3. Since his last meeting with the Minister, Mr. Brooke has invited the political parties to meet him to consider whether they could "resolve the outstanding obstacles to agreement" or "consider in the spirit that prevailed on 2 and 3 July the implications" if they were unable to reach agreement. The leaders met Mr. Brooke on the afternoon of the 27th January. A meeting with Party leaders on Monday afternoon established that there was an impasse for the time being. Discussions pointed to an implicit acceptance by all the leaders of a "soft landing" approach. It was agreed that in the interval before the election briefings would be

offered to the parties on matters likely to arise in talks (i. e. administrative arrangements, etc.) and that party leaders would have regular meetings with the Secretary of State on matters of mutual interest, such as economic issues. A joint press statement by the party leaders is expected to issue later this (Monday) afternoon. This is expected to reflect general support for the March 26th statement as the basis for future talks, give a positive assessment of contacts in recent weeks and refer to briefings and meetings with the Secretary of State in the interval. At Tuesday's Conference the Minister will wish to have an update on the situation, to note the new position and, perhaps, endorse the points that the talks process is postponed rather than a failure, and that the parties' attention should be directed in a positive way towards a future resumption and generally support the "soft landing".

Confidence Issues

4. The most significant item in this area is the Nelson case (which may also arise in the tete-a-tete). This involves the trial of an acknowledged British Army agent within the UDA, who was arrested as a result of the Stevens inquiry and who appears to have given his army handlers prior information on UDA plans to carry out two murders which subsequently took place (in one case a brother of the target). There were also reports (by John Ware in the (London) "Independent") that Nelson's Army handlers had suggested to Nelson that he encourage the UDA to bomb targets in this jurisdiction to encourage extradition procedures. The withdrawal of two murder charges by the Crown prosecutor has had the effect of limiting the scrutiny of Nelson's role and that of British Army intelligence. The case raises difficult issues about the role of Army intelligence and the question of legal cover-up. The Minister will wish at a minimum to point to the damaging

effect of these aspects of the case on confidence in the security forces. It is likely there will be questions on the issue at the subsequent press conference.

Security

5. This will mainly be a matter for the Department of Justice. It is likely to concentrate on recent IRA atrocities and also on Operation Loren, i. e., the refurbishment work in Fermanagh and other Western border posts. The British have expressed annoyance that some details of this operation appeared prematurely in the Irish Independent, allegedly from Irish sources.

Other Issues

6. The British will wish to raise extradition and the Dublin-Belfast rail link (where we are not yet in a position to go ahead). The items on public appointments etc. are uncontroversial and may be postponed if the Ministers' schedule requires. They also propose to raise the Garda Kelly case.

Seán O hUiginn
27 January, 1992