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Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Dublin, 16 November 1992

OVERVIEW NOTE

Presentation

1. The main purpose of the meeting will be to demonstrate clearly that the Conference is back in normal operation. Since there may be unionist criticism that the Conference should have been postponed to facilitate the Talks, it may be helpful to point in general terms to a full agenda in the security area, ongoing work in economic cooperation, and in confidence areas, as making the Conference particularly worthwhile. The main press focus after the Conference is likely to be on the intentions or expectations of the two Governments on future political talks.

Format

2. The Conference will begin with the usual tête-a-tête (points arising here may include Mr. Mayhew's interview with the Belfast Telegraph; a recent "hardline" tendency by the NIO Ministers on life sentence review; the Kane/Timmons/Kelly case; and, perhaps, prospective expenditure cuts in the North and Chairmanship of the International Fund for Ireland). The restricted session on security has a full agenda (threat assessment, review of Nelson case/collusion, cross-border roads, incursions, IED procedures, future work). It is assumed the Minister for Justice will deal with the security issues, but the Minister for Foreign Affairs may wish to take the lead on the Nelson case, as a confidence issue, and on border incursions.

3. The Plenary Session will deal with:

- (a) Political Talks: A general exchange of view on the Talks experience and an assessment of likely prospects for the future, in view of both Governments' stated desire to relaunch negotiations as early as possible.
- (b) Confidence Issues: Essentially putting down a marker n ongoing concerns. Cross-border roads will be dealt with also in this format (taking account of discussion in the restricted session). The Minister for Foreign Affairs is committed to raising the situation at Cloghogue.
- (c) Extradition and Bail: The British side will wish to raise concerns in this area, having now put in hand the introduction of legislation on the speciality rule. The Minister for Justice will take the lead on these issues.
- (d) Economic and Social Matters: A general marker on deprived areas (in case British budget cuts should adversely affect useful programmes in West Belfast, etc) and a review of a number of ongoing items of economic cooperation.

Anglo-Irish Division  
13 November 1992

Review of Political Talks

SPEAKING POINTS

"Fall-out" from the Talks

- We hoped to achieve a "soft landing" for this phase of the Talks. This has, on the whole, been achieved.
- It is regrettable that the Alliance Party chose to be as negative as they were.
- Dr Paisley's reaction was more predictable and typically unhelpful.
- We were encouraged by the restraint shown by Jim Molyneaux, though Ken Maginnis and other members of that party tried to point fingers during last Wednesday's Commons debate and in media interviews.
- We have exercised the utmost care in our own interviews to avoid recriminations, as indeed have the SDLP.
- We were encouraged by your own emphasis on this point in the Commons last Wednesday, both in your statement and in the subsequent exchanges.
- [ The "Belfast Telegraph" article caused some irritation but I was grateful for your letter in which you explained the background to this ]

## Making stock

- In the statement which the Government issued last Wednesday, we gave a positive evaluation of the Talks process to date and we looked forward to an early resumption.
- Our view is that, despite the frustrations to which they gave rise on occasion, the Talks which have just ended laid a very solid basis for future progress.
- Our positions on several key issues are still far apart. Nevertheless, we all have a much clearer sense of the points of difference and of agreement between us at this stage, and of what elements could eventually form part of an overall settlement.
- We feel that the work done will not be lost and can be built on in the future.
- We feel an interval for reflection to "digest" the experience of the Talks may be valuable all round.
- Our two Governments must take the lead after that to relaunch the process of negotiation early in the New Year.

## Looking ahead

- We are deeply committed to this process. We would like to see the Talks resume at the earliest possible date once the general election is out of the way.
- There is no doubt in my mind that ordinary people in both parts of the island want to see the Talks continue

without delay and this will be reflected in Government policy.

- We have also made clear that we envisage talks which would involve the two Governments and the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland.
- The agreement of 26 March 1991 has held up well and we would not wish to depart from it to any significant extent. In the round of informal consultations which is now envisaged, we will be arguing for the retention of its main elements.
- We might, however, envisage some changes in procedure (such as a greater recourse in future to bilateral contacts).
- What is your own assessment of the prospects for a resumption? And what approach do you plan to take in relation to the informal consultations?

[ If questioned about the length of a possible new gap : ]

- We are ready to consider a new gap at the first suitable opportunity, i. e., after our next Conference meeting if that seemed desirable. In deciding on its length, we would need once again to ensure a balance between furtherance of this process and protection of the Agreement.

Sir Ninian Stephen

- We need to consider Sir Ninian's position and how we should leave matters with the Australian Government.

I think it would be appropriate for the two Prime Ministers to write jointly to the Australian Prime Minister in order to bring him up to date on last week's developments; to thank him for Sir Ninian's services; and to ask that Sir Ninian might again be made available to us in the event that talks resume in the reasonably near future on roughly the same basis as before.

- If you agree, we might ask our officials to work on a draft which we could propose to our Heads of Government for signature.
  
- I understand Sir Ninian may himself be writing to both Prime Ministers. We could coordinate a response which expresses our appreciation and our hopes for resumed negotiations.

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Mr George O'Riordan  
Private Secretary to  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
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DUBLIN

12 November 1992

*Den Conn*

I have faxed to you a copy of a personal, manuscript letter which Sir Patrick has just written to Mr Andrews. The top copy follows.

Against the possibility that the faxed copy of the manuscript might be hard to decipher I thought that you would find it helpful to have the following typed version of the letter:

"Dear David

You will probably have heard of a news story in the Belfast Telegraph on Wednesday, picked up in some of today's press. It said the British Talks Team were blaming the Irish for the failure of the talks.

It's quite untrue, and my press people have lodged a strong protest with the journalist, a Barry White - whom I don't know, but to whom I was advised on Tuesday evening to give a briefing on the background to the talks, since he was a senior leader writer on the paper.



NOV '92 16:14

I wish I hadn't. He transposed the identification of one out of several obstacles or sticking points into an allocation of "blame", and went on to publish a news story about it - whereas I allocated none, nor even referred to any. Dlighter: My Private Secretary listened to the whole telephone conversation, over some 15 minutes, which took place just after you all left Stormont Castle, and confirms my recollection.

Because of the unpleasant inference of double dealing I wanted you to know this. John Hume told me he is a difficult man, - a friend of his but with whom he had a row at his Conference.

Looking forward to seeing you on Monday.

Yours sincerely

Patrick"

*John Hume*  
*WR*

W R FITTALL

ON BEHALF OF

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STATEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT ON NI TALKS

The Government have worked intensively over the past six months for a successful outcome to the Talks on the future of Northern Ireland.

Our commitment to this process and to the achievement of its objectives is undiminished by the ending of the present phase of negotiations.

We are determined to work for the resumption at the earliest possible date of a process of dialogue and negotiation involving the two Governments and the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland. We shall play an active role in the process of informal consultations aimed at finding the way forward.

We remain dedicated to the pursuit of a lasting settlement which will accommodate the two traditions in Ireland on equal terms and will bring about a new beginning for relationships within Northern Ireland, within the island of Ireland and between the peoples of these islands.

The dialogue and negotiations which have taken place this year have been unprecedented in their scope and importance. For the first time in seventy years, Irish Government Ministers have

engaged in a direct and sustained dialogue with Unionist leaders. This process has already accomplished the first essential condition for progress: It has enabled each of the main traditions in Ireland to define for the other the full dimensions of the sincerely held positions which must be reconciled in any lasting settlement, and to accept that new political arrangements must give expression to the identity and validity of each tradition. Future efforts must now be directed at securing agreement on how this can best be achieved.

The Government believe that these very tangible gains, and the considerable body of work already done, offer a promising foundation for the early resumption of negotiations. The intervening period might be availed of by all participants for the informal consultation envisaged in the concluding statement, and for further internal preparation.

We share the conviction expressed by the independent Chairman, Sir Ninian Stephen, that the objectives set in the Talks process are achievable. We hope that all participants will find it possible to cooperate in a constructive endeavour to resume the necessary process of negotiation, building on the experience and insights gained in the Talks, so as to secure a fair, honourable and durable accommodation in the interests of all the people of Ireland.

11 November, 1992