

E.R.

① Mr Bell
② POL
+1/12

- 1 MR ANGEL
- 2 PS/SECRETARY OF STATE

cc PS/S of S (B)
PS/Lord Gowrie (L&B)
PS/Mr Woodfield (L&B)
Mr Bell ✓
Mr Marshall
Mr Wyatt
Mr Blatherwick

POSSIBLE MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND MR HAUGHEY

The question of a meeting between the Secretary of State and Mr Haughey has been under consideration for some time. It was ^{Antal} hoped that it might have taken place in Dublin if the Secretary of State had been able to attend the England v Ireland match on 21 November but in the end he did not go. Since then we have all been preoccupied with other matters of a nature which made a meeting with Mr Haughey both impracticable and undesirable.

I am aware that the Secretary of State remains keen to have an early opportunity to meet Mr Haughey if at all possible. There remains considerable sensitivity about it: Mr Haughey has always, for reasons connected with the arms trial, been viewed with much greater suspicion than Dr FitzGerald. His behaviour during the hunger strike, though entirely explicable in relation to domestic political considerations, revived northern suspicions about him and these have been confirmed by his recent comments about the Anglo-Irish talks and their relationship to possible eventual Irish unity.

/need No doubt we/not contemplate Mr Prior going to Dublin specially to see Mr Haughey. For no very rational reason, there is always a greater sensitivity about seeing political figures from the Republic in Belfast. Any such meeting ought to take place in London and knowing Mr Haughey it would be pointless to hope that the fact of it could be kept entirely private. Tension in Northern Ireland is diminishing noticeably and if that process continues it might be possible to contemplate a meeting quite soon. But it would be undesirable to be hooked onto a firm date in view of the present risk that subsequent events might make it inappropriate.

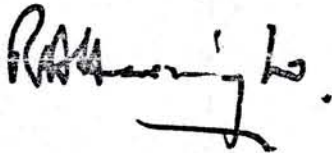
In the circumstances, I recommend that we should ask the Embassy in Dublin to make contact with Mr Haughey, to say that the Secretary

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of State would like to see him whenever a convenient appointment can be arranged. The Secretary of State's commitments in Belfast, for obvious reasons, are particularly heavy and it would be rather easier to find a slot in his diary if the meeting could take place in London. Mr Haughey might therefore be invited to let the Embassy know when he next has plans to visit London so that we could establish whether it would be possible for the Secretary of State to see him.

That procedure would be intended to ensure that Mr Haughey was reassured that the Secretary of State had not forgotten about him while still leaving a decision on the timing of any meeting in the Secretary of State's hands for as long as possible.

We should be grateful to know whether the Secretary of State would be content for us to proceed as indicated above.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'R A Harrington', with a stylized flourish at the end.

R A HARRINGTON
2 December 1981