

At 3/1/86 (1986)

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cc. Mr Brennan - M .
Mr Stephens

Your Ref: PUS/L/86/2/MLR

PUS B&L - M

ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT 1985

1. We had an opportunity to discuss briefly in London yesterday your minute of 2 January and the attached draft letter to Sir Robert Armstrong.

2. I wonder if, on reflection and in the light of that discussion, you might not take a slightly different line. This might say, in effect that - in considering wider reaction to the Agreement in the Republic, in Great Britain and internationally - one should be careful not to lose sight of the fact that its declared primary objective is to promote peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland itself. It is therefore absolutely crucial that those throughout the Government system who are trying to assess the overall reaction to the Agreement and the prospects for its positive development should continue to receive a balanced picture which above all does not neglect reactions and prospects within Northern Ireland itself. It is clearly not the function of HM Embassy in Dublin to do this, and therefore hardly surprising that the Ambassador's recent despatch conveys a degree of bland optimism which as seen from here is liable to mislead.

3. We therefore believe it to be important to prepare now, as a matter of some urgency, a comprehensive assessment of the reactions to the Agreement in Northern Ireland itself, and also to look forward to some of the very real obstacles and dangers we may have to face. We believe, too, that events in Northern Ireland may well continue to be volatile for many months ahead and that it will therefore be necessary to continue with a regular updating of such political intelligence. I would therefore like to discuss with you [Sir Robert Armstrong] at the next of our regular meetings how best the wider system could use such appreciations, and ensure that (simply as an example) the editorial line of the "Belfast Telegraph" is not regarded as less

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relevant to future prospects in Northern Ireland than the editorial line of the "Irish Times".

4. I think you could, perhaps, prepare the ground for the note the Secretary of State has in mind by an argument in these terms, keeping the heavyweight ammunition for the Secretary of State's minute to the Prime Minister and for our initial appreciation of the political situation and prospects here which should, in my view, be most carefully considered by us all and should seek to identify the main strands of opinion in both communities.

KPB

K P BLOOMFIELD

3 January 1986

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