

Please Mofax to
Belfast.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH



PUS/311

22 JAN 1987

N.I.O. LONDON

Sir Robert Andrew KCB
Northern Ireland Office

Dear Robert,

BREAKFAST MEETING BETWEEN THE FOREIGN SECRETARY AND THE
NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY ON 22 JANUARY

1. At this morning's short meeting between our two Secretaries of State, there was some discussion of how to handle relations with the next Irish Government. It was agreed that there was a strong probability that this would be headed by Mr Haughey. Mr King referred to speculation in the press that we were already engaged on constructing a "welcome package" for a Haughey Government and the undesirability of encouraging this impression. He thought that there was something to be said for leaving Mr Haughey to make the running in asking for a first meeting of the IGC after the Irish elections. As against this, it was suggested that there might be advantage in taking the initiative ourselves, in order to demonstrate that we were ready for continuing business under the Agreement as usual. Either way, it would be helpful to examine the sort of measures which we might be prepared to discuss with the Irish when the IGC resumes business. It was agreed between the two Secretaries of State that it would be useful for officials of our two Departments to get together soon to consider the possibilities and, more generally, to formulate recommendations on how best to handle a Haughey Government. Mr King mentioned that he had just endorsed in a radio interview the Alliance Party's line that the Irish election campaign fortuitously provided a period of at least two months during which the IGC would not be meeting and that this was an opportunity for the unionists, if they wished to take it, to enter into discussions about the future of Northern Ireland.

2. There was also some discussion of the arrangements for coordination between our two departments and between the NIO and the Embassy in Dublin. Mr King explained the importance he attached to being able to settle cross-border issues with the Irish Government as quietly and non-contentiously as possible through Secretariat channels and wondered whether it would be feasible to restrict the role of HM Ambassador at Dublin in relation to issues of this kind. He pointed to the unique situation created by the establishment of the IGC and the Joint Secretariat in Belfast and the difficulties of keeping the Embassy (and by implication the FCO) fully au courant with all the details of matters discussed in the Secretariat.

1. PUS to see

2. PS/PUS (B) - M

11 PS/Mr Bloomfield - M

Mr Brennan

Mr Chesterton

Mr M Elliott - M

Mr Bell

ZDGD 2/1

2...



3. Sir Geoffrey Howe, while acknowledging the validity of these concerns, made the point that they were not without parallels in other bilateral relationships; and that experience showed that keeping an Ambassador as up-to-date as possible about matters being discussed with his host Government in other fora was the best way to avoid wire-crossing, as well as of making the most effective use of the bilateral Embassy. It was agreed that on this too it would be desirable for officials from the two Departments to get together soon; and that the aim should be to agree guidelines for apportioning responsibility as between the Secretariat and the NIO on the one hand and the Dublin Embassy and the FCO on the other.

4. At the end of the discussion, Mr King asked the FCO to pursue three points arising from his recent lunch with the Canadian, Australian and New Zealand High Commissioners, which you kindly said you would record in a letter to me.

Yours ever

David

David Goodall

P.S. Since dictating the above, I have just received your letter of 22 January which duplicates some of the above. I can confirm that we will now follow up the three Commonwealth points; and I agree that Timothy George and Peter Bell should meet as soon as possible to discuss how best to take forward the remits described in paras 1 and 3 above.

cc:- PS
 PS/Lady Young
 PS/PUS
 Mr Houston
 Mr George, RID

