

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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cc Mr. Nelson
Mr. O'Halligan
Mr. Walsh
Mr. Siew
Mr. Collins

8/4/24

Preliminary Draft

Check list for forthcoming meeting

1. On long term policy, the Minister will probably be asked after the meeting whether he asked the new British Government for an expression of interest in a solution based on Irish unity. The Minister might wish to take account of this probability by summarizing for the Secretary of State the views of the Irish Government on constitutional arrangements in Northern Ireland, perhaps as follows

- (a) the object of policy should be to achieve stable and acceptable arrangements
- (b) the Partition solution has failed to achieve this;
- (c) the Irish government considers that stability will be achieved only within the context of an all-Ireland solution.

2. In the short and medium term, the Minister will no doubt wish to emphasise the need for political progress in the North. Mr. Atkins may well enquire what form an initiative should take. While the responsibility for determining the form of an initiative is a matter for the British, it would appear desirable to have before the meeting an idea of some of the limits of what might and might not be acceptable. In particular it would appear necessary that an initiative should take the form of an assembly/convention rather than a referendum, although it would seem undesirable that we should

go public on such questions before the debate has begun within Northern Ireland.

3. The Conservative Party election manifesto provides specifically for a return of power to the local authorities. The Minister might wish to explain the problems that such an initiative would give rise to.

4. The Minister might also wish to seek from the Secretary of State an assurance that there will be no devolution of power on other than a power sharing basis and explain the importance of the principle.

5. On general aspects of security cooperation the Minister might wish to set out the basic considerations determining the attitude of the Irish Government, in particular

- the determination of the Irish Government to use the fully resources of the security forces and the law available to bring to justice those suspected of involvement in terrorism
- the considerable effort of personnel and resources committed to border security
- the underlying difficulties of policing an unnatural border - difficulties which are confirmed by the experience of the police forces on both sides of the border.
- the constitutional problem of extradition or backing British warrants for "political" offences and experience of extra territorial legislation.

6. It is to be anticipated that Mr. Atkins will attempt to broaden the discussion of security question either by seeking improvements in the effectiveness of existing control of the border and/or by raising the problem of the need to obtain evidence from interrogation. These are of course questions primarily for the Minister for Justice. However the Minister might wish to draw attention to the counter-productive nature of much of the propaganda coming from British official sources, a great deal of which seems to be directed by the British Army at the new British Government.

7. It is possible that Mr. Atkins will also seek improved procedures for discussion of security cooperation, in particular the establishment of a forum in which representatives of the security forces and Ministers or departmental officials could participate. This is also a matter primarily for the Minister for Justice.

8. The Taoiseach will be meeting representatives of the SDLP on 25 June and it is likely that the SDLP will raise the Bennet report and the general question of police behaviour in the North.

9. The Minister might also wish to seek Mr. Atkins views on future developments in Long Kesh.

10. It would be useful to consolidate the position in respect of cross Border economic cooperation and to get confirmation of existing arrangements and proposals.

11. It would not appear appropriate to introduce into this first meeting the wide range of subjects (border roads, Crossmaglen GAA, etc.) which the Minister pursues on a continuing basis with the British authorities. It might however be useful to refer in a general way to the existence of these problems and to our hopes that solutions to them can be found.

Department of Foreign Affairs

June, 1979

PM - US scene?