

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2011/127/1089
Creation Date(s):	28 October 1981
Extent and medium:	6 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting between the Taoiseach, Tanaiste, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Northern Ireland Secretary of State.

1. This note summarises the principal items discussed at the above meeting held at Barretstown Castle on Tuesday the 27th of October, 1981. A full list of the participants on both sides is annexed together with a copy of the joint press release issued after the meeting.

2. Joint Studies.

The Taoiseach, expressing his personal views on this matter, said that he was in favour of publishing all of the reports of the various joint study working groups with the exception of the security group. If the "summaries" only were published this, in his view, would have an adverse effect on unionist opinion in Northern Ireland. He said that he had a political commitment to publicise the studies as much as possible. He had to "come clean" with the unionists on this. In any event the Leader of the Opposition knew what was in the documents and he, for his part, might feel that the Government were "playing down the process" if the "summaries" only were published. The Tanaiste agreed with these views and said that publication would strengthen "our hands here".

3. The Secretary of State said he saw difficulties in this regard. The reports of the various working groups would inevitably become anodyne as a result of publication. The British were looking at this on their side and in the end it would be a matter for the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister to decide. Mr. Woodfield made the point that the reports of the working groups had not been prepared with an eye to publication. The Secretary of State said that no matter what was published he was still worried that this would not solve the problem of satisfying certain unionist interests.

4. Anglo-Irish Council.

The Taoiseach referred to the proposed Anglo-Irish [Council]. He hoped that what would emerge would be that the inter-governmental relationship would be formalised into an institutional structure - a framework that would be constructive and which would alleviate suspicions.

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

-2-

He referred to the problem of bringing in Northern Ireland representatives which posed difficulties which would not be easy to overcome. Perhaps the parliamentary element of the Council might not be established forthwith because of the Northern Ireland representation difficulty. On the other hand it could go ahead with representation on the Northern Ireland side drawn from the three MEP's and the twelve MP's at Westminster. This formula could be expanded at a later stage. The Secretary of State said in his view the matter was worth pursuing. Initial representation could be drawn from the Westminster M.P.'s together with the European MP's and from a Northern Ireland assembly when this would be established. He acknowledged the difficulty of involving unionist representatives in the parliamentary forum.

5. The Tanaiste advocated that the British should give encouragement to the process of reconciliation i.e. the bringing of both sides together in Ireland. In his view the unionists would not move until the guarantee situation was resolved. The Secretary of State said in response that the unionists had made the point to him that all the time, movement was required on their part. Stormont had been taken away, direct rule introduced but still the demand was made for movement on their part. Mr. Ewart Bell expressed the view that it would be difficult to operate the parliamentary forum other than on the basis of elected representatives i.e. the twelve M.P.'s plus three MEP's. The Taoiseach said there would be provision for the expansion of Northern Ireland representation at the next general election. For the moment representation could be drawn from Westminster and the European Parliament and in due course from the Northern Ireland assembly if this came into existence. He thought it could not be easy for the unionists to sabotage an Anglo-Irish Parliamentary Council. On this the Secretary of State said that the proposal as currently developed would invite a walkout by a number of unionist representatives anyway.

6. Mr. Ewart Bell asked what the purpose of the parliamentary forum would be. Until this was clear it was difficult to say what the Northern Ireland reaction would be. The Taoiseach in response said it would deal with matters of concern to both States. The actual time devoted to Northern Ireland affairs might in fact be a small proportion of total business. The bulk of the members of the parliamentary forum could carry on even if the unionists held back.

7. Proportional Representation

The Minister for Foreign Affairs said that the views expressed were a good argument in support of PR for Westminster Elections. The Taoiseach referred to the fact that the British university constituencies had PR up to 1945 and that PR existed for all other elections in Northern Ireland

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

-4-

moving along a road. He hoped it would gain speed with time but if pushed too far it could stall. By putting flesh on the bones of the joint studies document the Prime Minister would be moving forward considerably.

10. Mr. Bell thought that there was evidence of a re-assessment of opinion on the part of unionists. The Secretary of State's recent statements were relevant in this regard. However it was important to recognise that "you can't drive an Ulsterman". The process of change should be allowed to take shape. The Sunningdale experiment had failed because it had been an effort to move quickly. It was important not to push too hard now. He urged that matters should be allowed to evolve.

11. The Taoiseach said that British policy in relation to the guarantee had been expressed in negative terms for some years past. On this account there was an illusion on the part of the Northern Ireland unionist in relation to the British attitude to the guarantee. Unionists should know what the true position was. At the same time it was wrong to put them under threat. The Tanaiste said that acceptance on the part of Britain of her role in assisting in the process of achieving reconciliation in Ireland should be acknowledged in the communique. Things had changed in Britain. This should be made known. The Secretary of State in response said that this point was now coming home. He asked how much the unionists could take. He understood the Government's request to express the guarantee in positive terms and this would be noted. This would "stir things". It remained a matter of fine judgement, however, as to what could be said at present in this regard. Lord Gowrie had given him a formula in this connection.

The guarantee does not prevent the development of a new relationship between both parts of Ireland based on co-operation in the sphere of economic development, security matters etc. The development of these matters and of the special relationship would make the border less relevant. We should concentrate on getting rid of the economic border. This was the best way of getting rid of the political border.

12. The Tanaiste felt that it would take a long time to see the veto withering away in this way. There had to be, in his view, some indication of change. The British Government must move to a point where it is positively supporting integration on this island. The Secretary of State in response said "you won't get that".

13. The Taoiseach referred to the vulnerable position of the SDLP and the erosion of their support to extremists. If moderate nationalism went, then there was no use in having

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

-3-

The Secretary of State advised that in his forthcoming meeting with the British Prime Minister the Taoiseach might speak of these difficulties but not prescribe a solution. He acknowledged that it was important that the minority get reasonable representation in Northern Ireland.

8. Guarantee.

The Secretary of State said that in the tete-a-tete meeting both sides had agreed to look at various formulations in relation to the guarantee with a view to using new language in this regard. The Tanaiste said there was a need to record the acceptance of the British role in moving to bring both parts of Ireland closer together. The Secretary of State thought that the Irish side would not get that at the forthcoming meeting with the British Prime Minister. This was going too far. There had been three outbreaks of bombings in London within the past three weeks and this was not helpful to the overall climate. In his view it would be counter-productive to look for a formula greater than that agreed at Sunningdale. The Taoiseach said that in their tete-a-tete discussion they had agreed that direct rule and full integration of Northern Ireland into the UK were out. The Secretary of State said he believed that the Ulster unionists had moved a bit in recent times.

9. The Taoiseach said, referring to the communique which would be issued after his forthcoming meeting with the British Prime Minister, that as regards the guarantee this was a matter of fine judgement. He thought there was a certain sense of realism in Northern Ireland within the unionist community. He said that it would be necessary to effect changes here and in this regard referred to his recent initiative on the Constitution. A response was needed from the British side.

9. The Secretary of State said that if the Anglo-Irish [Standing Conference], the Parliamentary body and movement on the economic front were taken into account these were all considerable advances in their own right. These measures would be welcomed in Great Britain but not in parts of Northern Ireland. In his view they represented a considerable move on the part of the British. The Tanaiste thought that all of these items were in the main acceptable to unionists but more was needed. The Taoiseach thought that while these measures were not seen here as prejudicial they did not represent a considerable advance in relation to what the Government here were trying to do. The Secretary of State said he admired and respected what the Taoiseach was trying to do. However, there was a danger of putting the unionists into an intransigent position. He saw the process as a vehicle

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

moderate unionism which the Secretary of State was trying to encourage. Mr. Prior said in response that he saw in his first days in Northern Ireland that the hunger strike was damaging the SDLP. The chasm however was not one that could be jumped at one stride.

14. All-Ireland Court.

Following a brief discussion on this item both sides agreed that it would be appropriate to ask their respective Attorneys General to examine this proposal in principle. This examination could not, it was recognised, be completed in time for the forthcoming summit. The Secretary of State said in this regard that the more helpful the Government here could be on security, extraterritorial legislation etc the better. The question of extradition was of course an important issue in this regard. The more both sides emphasised the security dimension the more it would open "other things". It would strengthen the Prime Minister's hand. The Minister for Foreign Affairs said that both sides knew that there was very good co-operation at operational level but there was a difficulty in revealing this. There was a brief discussion on the particular problems of the South Armagh/Monaghan/Louth area with particular reference to the recent kidnapping incident. The Taoiseach availed of the occasion to express his regret that a recent statement in the Irish Times had erroneously referred to the British Ambassador as having been called in by the Taoiseach in this connection.

15. Gas and Electricity.

The Tanaiste said that if agreement could be reached with the Northern Ireland authorities on the selling price of Kinsale gas it would be possible to provide a supply by December 1983. Reference was also made to the desirability of restoring the North/South electricity interconnector.

16. The meeting adjourned at this point for a photo call and did not resume in plenary session.

(Faint background text: "Mr. Prior, Ambassador, ...")

(Handwritten signature)
28 October, 1981.

Copies to

Secretary to the Government
Mr. M. Lillis.

(Handwritten note: "At Sec to Taoiseach")

Mr. D. Neligan
Mr. M. Burke
Ms. Mgt. Hennessy
Dept. of Foreign Affairs.

MEETING BETWEEN AN TAOISEACH AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND, 27 OCTOBER 1981

Participants

Irish side

An Taoiseach, Dr Garret FitzGerald
An Tánaiste, Mr Michael O'Leary
Senator James Dooge, Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Dermot Nally, Secretary to Government
Mr Seán Donlon, Secretary, Dept. Foreign Affairs
Dr Eamon Kennedy, Ambassador, London
Mr David Neligan, Asst. Sec., Dept. Foreign Affairs
Mr Michael Lillis, Asst. Sec., Taoiseach's Dept.
Mr Frank Murray, P.O. Dept. of Taoiseach
Mr Martin Burke, Counsellor, Dept. Foreign Affairs
Ms Margaret Hennessy, Counsellor, Dept. Foreign Affairs

British side

The Rt. Hon. Mr James Prior, MP, Secretary of State for
Northern Ireland
Mr Boyce-Smith, PSM
Mr Philip Woodfield, Permanent Sec. Northern Ireland Office
H.E. Leonard Figg, Ambassador, Dublin
Mr Ewart Bell, Permanent Secretary, Head of NIO Civil Service
Mr John Marshall, Deputy Secretary, NIO London