

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



<b>Reference Code:</b>	2012/90/1092
<b>Creation Date(s):</b>	13 June 1982
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	4 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of the Taoiseach
<b>Access Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

*M. Murray*  
*Copy for information*  
*14. 6. 82*

Government Meeting on Strategy.

13th June, 1982.

Notes on matters within area of responsibility of Northern Ireland and International Affairs Section, Department of the Taoiseach.

General

1. These notes seek to identify major issues requiring consideration or action by the Government over the remainder of 1982. Many of the issues will continue, of course, to require attention subsequently. In general the notes raise questions rather than supply answers.

Northern Ireland

2. The principal issue is to decide on the best way to advance Government objectives, in the face of the pursuit by the British Government of the Prior initiative and in the light of the present chilliness in Anglo-Irish relations. This will depend in part on the answers to various subsidiary questions. Will those in the House of Commons opposed to the Prior proposals maintain their success in delaying processing of the legislation through a filibuster? Will the British Government impose a guillotine on debate or will Mrs. Thatcher, in particular, be happy to refrain from doing so on the excuse that the measure is a constitutional one (note that the debate on the Scotland and Wales Devolution Bill was frequently guillotined)? If the Bill is not enacted before the Westminster summer recess in time to allow elections to an Assembly in the autumn, will the British Government persist with the measure?

3. These questions lead to a further series. Given the opposition elsewhere - at Westminster and by political parties in the North, especially the Official Unionists and the S.D.L.P. - should the Government refrain from further overt action to stymie the

initiative or should further overt steps be taken? If the British Government persist with the initiative now or later, can or should the Government, initiate or concur in any steps to revive the Anglo-Irish process in its political dimension - as distinct from economic co-operation of direct benefit to the State or to areas on our (or both) side(s) of the border.

4. Here much depends on the assessment of the potential (a) in the short-term and (b) in the medium to long-term, of a revived Anglo-Irish process for the promotion of progress towards Government objectives - and of the potential of possible alternative lines of policy. In the previous evolution of the Anglo-Irish process subsequent to the Taoiseach's meeting with Mrs. Thatcher in May, 1980, there was some evidence that the British administrative/political establishment - or part of it - saw development of the Anglo-Irish process as facilitating gradual British disengagement from the North over a lengthy period. It never appeared likely that Mrs. Thatcher shared any such view but it was not to be excluded that she had consciously decided to go the first part of the road, in return for maintenance and improvement of security co-operation. At any rate, the Dublin communique of December 1980 contained sufficient "constructive ambiguity", as it was termed by one senior British official, to embrace the necessarily different perceptions of the different participants and other interested parties as to its significance. However, over the succeeding months, statements, speculation and publicity tended to bring those differences in perception into the open and outside the tolerable limits of fudging for both sides. In addition, the attitude of the British Government and of the Prime Minister, in particular, to the H-Block hunger strike prejudiced the atmosphere for pursuit of the process.

5. These developments brought Mrs. Thatcher's unionist convictions to the forefront again. These attitudes doubtless

influenced her to reject the parliamentary tier of an Anglo-Irish Council and possibly to acquiesce in the Prior initiative. All available information is that the British Government has been disappointed and Mrs. Thatcher incensed by Ireland's policy in relation to the Falklands crisis.

6. This background leads to various questions. Is the inherent mutuality of interest sufficiently strong that after a cooling-off period - and especially if the Prior initiative fails - one could expect the British Government to favour revival of the Anglo-Irish process in its political dimension along lines that would be acceptable to the Irish Government? Would sufficient scope for "constructive ambiguity" now remain? If so, should the Government here, in its actions, seek to preserve or create the conditions for a cooling-off period and subsequent revival of the process, presumably through a further Summit meeting? Or will the "Falklands factor", in relation not only to British perception of Irish attitudes but also in its wider effects on British chauvinism and attitudes to territorial disputes, together with dominance of the Prime Minister with her unionist views reinforced, turn British policy on the North into unwelcome channels such as closer integration with Britain, currently being strongly promoted by some Tories as well as Official Unionists?

7. If one answered "yes" to the first question in the preceding paragraph, other questions follow. Some relate to the method of establishment, structure and functions of a parliamentary tier of the Anglo-Irish Council. Others relate to what other short-term objectives in the political sphere, apart from the parliamentary tier, the Government would wish to pursue. Another again is how to re-interest the British Prime Minister in pursuing the process.

8. If, on the other hand, one gives an affirmative answer to the alternative hypothesis in paragraph 6 other questions

are posed. How far would an unwelcome British policy be a creation of the Cabinet at large or of Mrs. Thatcher? What are her prospects of remaining Head of Government or Tory leader? Depending on the answers to these and other questions following is it possible and preferable to allow Anglo-Irish relations to "tick over" pending assumption of office by a new Prime Minister in Britain? Or would the wait be too long and, if so, should one pursue possible alternative policies such as seeking to mobilise international pressure on Britain or keeping relations no more than correct and co-operation to a bare minimum, while waiting for the effects of an economic collapse in the North to impinge on British policy?

8. One has to assess here whether worthwhile results can realistically be expected e.g. in terms of the extent and force of any international pressure and the degree of response by the British.

9. The choices may not, of course, be quite so stark. One could envisage satisfactory or alternatively, minimally acceptable development of the Anglo-Irish process coupled with attempts in a manner that would not be confrontationalist, to put external pressure on the British. In any policy, moreover, a possible objective and semi-autonomous line of action would be to maximise factors and processes for North-South integration in Ireland, in the political, economic and social domains. Effort should be devoted to identifying and pursuing all worthwhile possibilities here.

#### European Community

10. In the strictly European Community sphere, the following are the major upcoming issues:

- (1) Further action on the three components of the Mandate
- (a) development of Community policies: