

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



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Northern Ireland Review Meetings

1 During the period 10 March to 14 December 1982 meetings to review all aspects of ^{the} Northern Ireland situation in the context of Anglo-Irish relations were held on two occasions - 7 April and 29 July, 1982. The meetings, which involved Members of the Government, the AG (for April meeting only) and officials, were presided over by the Taoiseach. A full list of those present on both occasions is included in the summary reports of the meetings which are annexed (Appendices A and B).

2 Meeting of 7 April, 1982

A summary report of this meeting can be found at Appendix A. The meeting reviewed the Northern Ireland situation under the usual headings - political, security and economic. Following discussion of various aspects of the British Government's White Paper on Devolution, the view was confirmed that the Government should maintain their attitude to this initiative, i.e. that it was unworkable and did not focuss sufficiently on the broader dimensions to the problem. It was agreed that the Government would continue to press for development of the Anglo-Irish process and in particular the establishment of an Anglo-Irish Parliamentary institution in which Northern Ireland representatives could participate.

3 On security, the meeting was informed that North/South security co-operation was operating effectively and that this was acknowledged by both the RUC and the British Army. The Attorney General reported on the meeting which his predecessor had with the British Attorney General and also on contacts at official level on the subjects of extradition, joint interrogation and the concept of an all-Ireland Court. In regard to extradition, the Attorney recommended that the attitude taken by successive Irish Governments should be maintained. On joint interrogation

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he outlined objections to this on at least three grounds. As regards the all-Ireland Court, the Attorney was of the opinion that the proposal considered in this regard by the previous Government was a cumbersome arrangement, the merits of which, in terms of securing more convictions of fugitive offenders, were, in his view, rather dubious. On the recommendation of the Attorney General, it was decided that for the present, our position would be that we would do nothing more in this regard; that we would say that the Attorneys and their officials had met and had a useful exchange of views; and that there the matter would rest. If, however, there was a demand from the British side for a further meeting, at official level, there would be no objections to such a meeting, on the basis that it would consider only the difficulties involved so far as we were concerned and avoid consideration of the policy issues.

4 The possibility of further North/South economic co-operation in the fields of agriculture, industry and tourism was discussed. It was considered that progress in these areas in Northern Ireland would depend crucially on political progress and ultimate stability: movement in the political and economic spheres would have to become more inter-related. It was accepted that Irish efforts in this area should be co-ordinated within the framework of a Programme of Action under the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council.

Conclusions of April Meeting

5 The following policy guidelines emerged from the meeting of 7 April:-

- the Government would maintain the attitude previously expressed to the Secretary of State's White Paper;
- the Government would pursue the development of the Anglo-Irish process and press for the establishment of the Parliamentary tier;

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- full-scale security co-operation would be continued: it was recognised that this was most important at the practical or operational level;
- a higher priority would be given to all aspects of economic co-operation, with particular reference to areas where Unionist perception of the benefits of all-Ireland approaches could be enhanced.

Meeting of 29 July 1982

6 The conclusions drawn up by the Taoiseach in winding up the discussion at this meeting are set out in Appendix B. Among the conclusions reached by the Taoiseach were the following:-

(i) Summit or Ministerial Meetings

Until there was an improvement in the present climate there appeared to be no possibility of a productive Summit Meeting taking place. Accordingly, we should make no move to seek a meeting at this stage although we would not necessarily respond negatively to any British approach for a political level meeting.

(ii) Approach to Anglo-Irish Relations

Our approach to Anglo-Irish relations should be neutral. We should not seek meetings and risk a refusal. On the other hand, we should respond positively if suggestions for meetings or contacts emanated from the British.

(iii) Voting Rights

Action on this matter should not be taken further at this stage.

(iv) Meetings with British Ministers

All proposals for meetings with British Ministers should be cleared with the Taoiseach in advance.

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At official level, routine or technical meetings could continue but any suggestion for a further meeting between officials of the Offices of the two Attorney Generals should be submitted to the Taoiseach.

British Demarche of 26 July, 1982

7 Having regard to the conversation which took place on 26 July in the Foreign Office in London between Mr Douglas Hurd MP, Minister of State and Ambassador Kennedy in relation to Mr Hurd's statement that the British authorities did not consider they were obliged to consult with the Irish Government on the future of Northern Ireland, it was agreed at the review meeting of 29 July that the Minister for Foreign Affairs should ask the British Ambassador to call on him later that day with a view to seeking clarification of the British Government's position. A copy of an Aide-Memoire which was given to the British Ambassador on the evening of the 29th July is annexed to the conclusions of the review meeting of that date. A copy of a note dated 20 August, 1982 received from the British Embassy in response to the Aide-Memoire of 29 July and of the text of a further note which was handed to the British Ambassador on 3 September, 1982 on the subject of Anglo-Irish consultation is also annexed (Appendices C and D). The Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, in handing over the note of 3 September, explained to the British Ambassador that since the British document (dated 20 August) was obviously a statement of the British position in this regard, it was thought appropriate to put on record a counter-statement of the Irish position. In doing so, it was made clear that it was not our intention to engage in a prolonged series of written exchanges. The Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs stated that it was our hope that the file would now be closed.

8 There have been no further exchanges on this subject.

1 December 1982