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21 OCT 1985

RECORD OF MEETING HELD IN CONFERENCE ROOM D, CABINET OFFICE

ON 17 OCTOBER 1985 at 11am

Present:

Mr C L G Mallaby	-	Cabinet Office (In the Chair)
Ms J Caines	-	No 10 Press Office
Mr M Horne	-	" " " "
Mr J Houston	-	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Mr G Clark	-	" " " "
Mr I Roberts	-	" " " "
Mr G Hand	-	" " " "
Mr D Barrie	-	" " " "
Mr R Ehrman	-	Northern Ireland Office
Mr P Bell	-	" " " "
Mr D Gilliland	-	" " " "
Mr D R C Christopher	-	Cabinet Office

ANGLO IRISH AGREEMENT: PRESENTATION

1. The meeting considered a paper prepared by the Northern Ireland Office on the presentational aspects of an Anglo Irish Agreement concerning Northern Ireland. The main views expressed are recorded below.

General

2. The main burden in presentation of an Anglo Irish Agreement in Parliament and to the media would probably fall on the Prime Minister and the Northern Ireland Secretary. The role of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary would probably focus on presentation of an Agreement internationally. He might for instance conduct interviews for United States radio and television. The NIO had in mind that the Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office, Mr Scott, might visit the United States shortly after signature of an Agreement (see below).
3. Since points we make abroad about an Agreement, eg in the United States, would be reported in the United Kingdom and especially Northern Ireland, the line in presenting the Agreement internationally should not differ substantially from the domestic line.

The NIO were conscious of the uncertainties surrounding the presentation of proposals for devolved government in Northern Ireland. The balance and relationship between devolution and the Agreement would need careful handling.

Command Paper

- 4 The timing of publication of a Command Paper comprising the texts of the Agreement and the Summit Communique needed careful consideration to ensure its availability as soon as possible after signature of an Agreement. The FCO would make arrangements. The Prime Minister should be consulted about sponsoring the Command Paper in Parliament. The FCO would also draft the text of the motion for debate.

Parliament: Debate and briefing

- 5 Consideration should be given to encouraging the participation of Northern Ireland Peers in the debate in the House of Lords, particularly Lord O'Neill and Lord Fitt. The NIO would put suggestions to the Lord President of the Council and would ask him to approach those concerned.

- 6 Mr Nicholas Scott would be responsible for briefing the Conservative Back Bench MPs. The proposed letter to Conservative MPs enclosing written question and answer briefing should be signed by the Northern Ireland Secretary, but he should be asked to consider whether the Foreign Secretary should be a co-signatory with him. (NIO for action).

- 7 The Cabinet Office would ask Sir Robert Armstrong to consult the Prime Minister on her return from Nassau regarding the briefing of leaders of the Opposition (which might be done one day before the Summit) and briefing of the leaders of the OUP and DUP (which should be done within hours of signature of an Agreement).

- 8 The NIO would consider nearer the time whether the Northern Ireland Secretary should address the Northern Irish Assembly or offer its members a briefing.

- 9 Hostile resolutions might be tabled in the European Parliament. The FCO would investigate the requirement for a special briefing of MEP's likely to be sympathetic to an Agreement and would advise the Chairman on the line to take at the next round of talks with the Irish.

The Media

- 10 The Leader writers for the Times, Guardian and Financial Times (Malcolm Rutherford) should be briefed by Ministers during the Summit itself or as soon after as possible, not on the day before. The popular press should be briefed either at the same time or separately. No 10 Press Office and the NIO should consider how this should be done. Sir Robert Armstrong might propose to the Prime Minister that she give Mr Utley (Daily Telegraph) a separate briefing. A summary of the Agreement had been prepared as a Press Release and agreed with the Irish. No decision had yet been taken on its use.
- 11 Mr Ingham had recommended, and it appeared from contacts with the Taoiseach's press secretary that the Irish agreed, that the joint press conference at the end of the Summit should be televised but that there should be no separate interviews given by either Head of Government on the same day. The press conference should be limited to about 30 minutes and include a prepared statement. The Northern Ireland Secretary should be advised to give his first interview no sooner than the day following the Summit.
- 12 While the value in domestic terms of a Prime Ministerial broadcast to Northern Ireland immediately following the Summit would be considerable, it was questionable whether it was right to do this before her statement in Parliament. The Cabinet Office would ask Sir Robert Armstrong to consult the Prime Minister.

Overseas

- 13 At the next round of the Anglo Irish talks the Irish would be asked again whether the Taoiseach or any other Irish Minister intended to visit the US after the Summit. Hitherto the Irish had said they were thinking in

terms of official emissaries (Mr Donlon). Whatever the Irish intention it was important in the view of the NIO that Mr Scott visit the United States at that time and the Ambassador in Washington welcomed this.

14 Arrangements for the presentation of an Agreement to foreign governments were already under consideration: the US government and EC governments, and also Canada and Australia might be briefed in strict confidence shortly before the Summit. Despite formal difficulties over briefing Community colleagues on Northern Ireland in Political Co-operation it might be in our interest to brief EC governments at a meeting of Foreign Ministers or of the Political Committee. An additional possibility, also for consideration, was a briefing for EC Ambassadors in London after the Summit.

15. The FCO would pursue with the Northern Ireland Office the desirability of summoning back representatives from posts in Washington, BIS New York, Paris and Bonn for briefing before the Summit.

Cabinet Office
18 October 1985