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## FUTURE OF THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT

1. You will have seen elsewhere speculation that Michael Lillis is working on a new initiative, which he would present to Mr Haughey so that the new Taoiseach could stamp his authority on Anglo-Irish relations. As a result of a conversation over lunch on 2 April (which arose out of a request from Mr Lillis to call and chat to me) I believe I have some idea of what he has in his mind.
2. He starts from the premise that Mr Haughey, although obliged by internal and external pressures to go along with the Agreement, remains strongly antipathetic to the idea of a longterm involvement of the Republic in a Northern Ireland still ultimately governed and administered by HMG. Lillis is therefore attracted by the idea that, instead of a process which "dribbles on" into the indefinite future, the participating Governments should make a concerted effort to agree real and inter-linked progress on the main areas defined by the Agreement. The objective in doing so would be to "clear the pitch" for a really serious bid for devolution. The objective then should be to work towards the devolution of the fullest powers possible, including law and order powers. If (a) the two Governments have already agreed a real and convincing programme meeting their basic criteria and (b) very extensive powers were to be devolved, the Conference could retire to the outer margins of their relationship and the Maryfield Secretariat possibly be dispensed with. Mr Lillis's view is that the idea of "Irishmen talking to Irishmen" would basically appeal to Mr Haughey.
3. I said that I thought these were very interesting ideas. I shared the implication that if things remained unchanged, we were unlikely to make progress towards the aim of devolution jointly endorsed under the Agreement. However, apart from the problem of identifying a definitive package of reforms which would please the Irish without infuriating the Unionists, it was not easy to see early devolution of law and order powers to Northern Ireland devolved institutions. With the police in the lead (as they have been for some years) and the army/UDR in support, we could have the difficult and tricky situation of divided responsibility for security populations, a division of which we had some past unhappy experience before the onset of direct rule.

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4. In discussing the more immediate future under the Intergovernmental Conference I emphasised to Mr Lillis how unhelpful it would be - particularly if the Irish were envisaging at the same time closer and economic co-operation under the Agreement - to see Fianna Fail in Government drifting away from the coalition line on the MacBride Principles. Lillis said we undoubtedly faced a problem here, but not necessarily an insuperable one. We would need to put the emphasis on positive measures of development (and not just in the equal opportunity field) which would bring some help to the Catholic unemployed. Simple opposition to the MacBride Principles per se was likely to be misunderstood and misinterpreted.
5. It may be opportune to discuss some of these matters at your forthcoming Steering Group.

*KPB*

K P BLOOMFIELD  
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