

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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SECRET

## NORTHERN IRELAND

Taoiseach,

As arranged, I attended a meeting in London with Sir Robert Armstrong, Cabinet Secretary, Mr. David Goodall, FCO, Ambassador Goddison, and Messrs. Brennan and Bourn, Assistant Secretaries, Northern Ireland Office. Mr. Sean Donlon, Ambassador Dorr, Mr. A. Ward, Mr. Michael Lillis and Declan Quigley also attended on our side. Messrs. Lillis and Dorr made a full note of the meeting which will be forwarded to you as soon as possible. This note summarises the salient points.

Items discussed included -

- (1) the form and possible outcome of your meeting with the Prime Minister;
- (2) a Ministerial Commission for Northern Ireland;
- (3) a Joint Security Commission;
- (4) an all-Ireland Court;
- (5) a Northern Ireland Assembly;
- (6) a Northern Ireland Executive;
- (7) an Anglo-Irish Parliamentary Body;
- (8) a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland;
- (9) Articles 2 and 3;
- (10) Policing - RUC reform or restructuring etc.

The meeting began and continued for some time in a more difficult atmosphere than in the past. Armstrong adverted to the bomb in Brighton and said that we were fortunate that the meeting was taking place at all - that he had not, in fact, had to phone cancelling it. He said that the outcome of the present process would depend very much on whether the Brighton event was a one-off or a harbinger of other things. If an IRA bombing campaign started, the possibility of movement was simply non-existent. The Prime Minister would never do anything which appeared to be yielding to pressure.

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As the meeting progressed the atmosphere became warmer - and at the end, Armstrong took great care to come and emphasise again how glad they were to be engaged in the process which they regard as extremely important and expressed the hope that we would all see a successful outcome. He mentioned that in so far as they were concerned, the timing was propitious. We now had a Prime Minister and a Secretary of State who were concerned and had the capacity to carry through whatever might emerge.

On your meeting with the Prime Minister, the British side now envisage a statement of principles or objectives which will be based on detailed background work. The Prime Minister will not subscribe to any statement unless she knows precisely what it means. She is willing to come to Ireland and arrangements for the meeting are going ahead on this basis. She is likely to be accompanied by the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

We emphasised the importance for Ireland and for UK/Ireland relations of what was being considered here and the real dangers for the Government and country in the exercise. It was essential to get the balance right. The British are under no illusions as to what is involved for us.

Much of the time was spent in discussing the arrangements for devolved Government, the Ministerial Commission, the setting up and constitution of an Executive, the Joint Court, the Security Commission, and policing etc. The two areas of major difficulty are in the functions of the Ministerial and Security Commission (where our role must be more than consultative) and in the changes to be made in policing arrangements. The British are receptive to our views but are sensitive to anything which could be described as diminishing sovereignty.

We were aiming at the beginning of the talks to get a joint paper agreed by both sides, which could form the basis for your discussions with the Prime Minister. There was much hesitation, initially, on the part of the British - if not an actual drawing back from where we had been before. At the end of the meeting, however, they themselves came forward with the proposals for a joint paper, which is to be prepared by Messrs. Goodall and Lillis. This paper will be the main item on the agenda for the next meeting which is to take

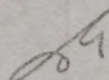
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place towards the end of this month, here. That meeting will be concerned also with drawing up a statement of principles or objectives according to which the other matters on the agenda will be implemented - if they are agreed.



17th October, 1984.

cc. Tanaiste  
Mr. Sean Donlon, Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs  
Mr. A. Ward, Secretary, Department of Justice  
Mr. M. Lillis, Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs.