

NATIONAL ARCHIVES**IRELAND**

Reference Code:	2003/13/16
Title:	Report of a meeting in London on 27 April, 1972, between the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Patrick Hillery, and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, William Whitelaw. Topics discussed included rioting in Derry, Vanguard shooting, the ban on marches, internment, the issue of a United Ireland, a plebiscite in Northern Ireland, 'No-Go' areas in Derry, constitutional arrangements and local government reform in Northern Ireland, the behaviour of the British Army, the influence of the IRA [Irish Republican Army] in Catholic areas, North/South economic cooperation, communication between London and Dublin, cross-border movements of the IRA, and reporting of meetings in the press.
Creation Date(s):	27 April, 1972
Level of description:	Item
Extent and medium:	9 pages
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Access Conditions:	Open
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MEETING IN LONDON ON 27/4/1972 BETWEEN THE
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND.

The meeting took place in the Secretary of State's office and lasted for a little over an hour. The Secretary of State was accompanied by -

Sir William Niell, Permanent Secretary;

Sir Stewart Crawford, ^{van} Under-Secretary of State,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office;

Mr D J Trevelyan, N.I. Office;

Mr P L P Davis, Private Secretary to the Secretary
of State.

The Minister had with him Mr McCann, Secretary of the Department, and the Ambassador.

The Minister was warmly welcomed by the Secretary of State who said he was very glad to have the opportunity for a talk. In expressing thanks, the Minister mentioned that he had seen from the papers that the Secretary of State had recently visited Derry. Mr Whitelaw thought Derry a lovely city. There had been a big story of rioting in the Waterside area. This was greatly exaggerated. Press and Television are over-keen to find evidence of sectarian conflict.

Mr Whitelaw went on to say that one of his great anxieties is to try to avoid Vanguard shooting. They have the weapons but he believes they will not use them. He said that he would later in the day be lifting the general ban on marches, granting an amnesty back to December and repaying fines which had been paid. Both Miss Devlin and Mr McManus really wanted to go to prison.

The Secretary of State continued by saying that he is still

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in comparatively easy country on the release of internees. Those he has been letting out so far have not been difficult people to release. He will, however, reach a hard core shortly and these are a cause of considerable anxiety to him. On the intervention of John Hume, he is releasing Sean Keenan who, he is assured, is likely to give a lead against violence.

The Minister said that it is important that the Taoiseach should give a lead at this time. It would, he felt, greatly help the situation if the Taoiseach were, in the course of a wide-ranging speech, to indicate that, in his view, the initiative is part of the road forward to a final and peaceful solution. In this statement the Taoiseach could talk about the arrangements which he is making for the study of possible changes in the Constitution in an effort to influence Protestant thinking on the question of a United Ireland. A statement of this nature would have a useful appeal to moderate Protestants. The Minister also indicated that he thought it might be useful to get down to North/South cooperation, possibly at official level.

Mr Whitelaw said that he has to be very careful about extreme Protestant opinion. Even in the case of moderate Protestants, there is a broad spectrum of them who are fearful of being forced into a United Ireland. The question which is very much in their minds is whether Britain is now about to take a further major political step. He has to re-assure them. Mr Whitelaw went on to say that there has been no decision yet on the plebiscite or on the future evolution of the North.

The Minister said that what he had in mind in his reference to what the Taoiseach might say in a wide ranging speech was that the Taoiseach would express a personal view as to where the initiative is leading

and this without attribution to anybody. Mr. Whitelaw said he thought this might be helpful. He himself cannot envisage Westminster allowing the return of Stormont, at any rate in its previous form. He can, on the other hand, envisage the establishment of an administration in the North comparable to the Greater London Council. Mr. Whitelaw then asked the Minister for his thinking on a plebiscite. The Minister replied that a plebiscite could further polarise the two communities and Mr. Whitelaw observed that he is not keen to do anything which would polarise the situation more than it is. The Minister continued by saying that he would have reservations about a plebiscite predicated on an undemocratic set-up. As to the misgivings of the majority in the North about joining a United Ireland, appropriate changes in the Constitution could help. Once the two countries are in the Common Market, the economic fears in the North will vanish.

Mr. Whitelaw then said that he would greatly welcome any help Dublin can give. He is doing his best to convince moderate Catholic opinion in the North that he himself is entirely impartial. He found a pathetic fear of Army excesses among Catholics especially in the Bogside and Creggan. He wants to get the Army out of sensitive areas and the police in. There is no possibility of a local police force for the Bogside but it may be possible to get some people there into the police.

The Minister intervened to say that it would greatly help the Taoiseach in giving an appropriate lead if Mr. Whitelaw could satisfy him that the initiative will be followed up in a manner which will lead to the desired final solution.

Mr. Whitelaw could not, at this stage, prejudge what the constitutional solution will be. It is doubtful in the end if there will be wholehearted agreement on the way forward. Westminster and Dublin should give the

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best leadership possible. For that reason, they must absolutely understand each other. He himself must never go beyond what he can deliver.

The Minister said that there has always been in the North a central core of people who want a United Ireland. In the Island as a whole the great majority favour unification. Mr. Whitelaw said he fully accepted this adding that there must be some Protestants in the North who also want the country united. There are far too many arms in the hands of Protestants and there is always the risk that they may use them. Unfortunately, the Army does something wrong every now and again. For example, raids are sometimes made on the wrong houses and this type of mistake is a provocation. He must protect law and order and, for that reason, he cannot cut down patrolling too much.

Sir William Nield said nobody wants the IRA to extend their influence outside the Creggan and Bogside. In this, he felt there is an opportunity for effective cooperation between North and South. Mr. McCann intervened to say that the important thing is to wean the minority population away from the IRA. An early improvement in the employment situation in Catholic areas would be a considerable help.

Mr. Whitelaw said he is determined to do everything he can to convince the minority that the Army will not behave in a vindictive manner. It must be his purpose to try and get the police into the problem areas and the Army out of these areas. He is somewhat inhibited for the moment because police morale is on the low side. The Minister remarked that, in the absence of clarification as to where the initiative is going, the minority must naturally entertain fears that things will again be handed back to

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Mr Faulkner and that there will be a return to the previous position. Mr. Whitelaw said he is going ahead rapidly with Local Government reform. Local Councils will have only limited powers, but the nomination powers on boards are very considerable indeed. He is satisfied that the reform of Local Government will be a tremendous help.

Mr. Whitelaw continued by saying that he must be very careful to take no decisions which would make the ultimate arrangement in relation to the North more difficult. He must keep saying that he has no intention of forcing the majority against their will into a United Ireland. He would be most ready to hear views on possible solutions. A great many people are talking about complete integration with Britain as a solution but this is not one that would appeal to him.

The Minister said that such a step would certainly escalate violence. He went on to say that the small minority population in the South have fared well. For example, they occupy a completely disproportionate place in the medical profession and in big business.

The Minister then enquired whether the further release of internees will be related to the risk of a Protestant backlash. Mr. Whitelaw replied that it would be broadly on a judgment of the Protestant reaction. He must also have in mind the morale of the police. The position, however, will not become difficult until he reaches the hard core.

Mr. Whitelaw returned to the question of Local Government reform and said that the implications of it will be far reaching. Derry, for example, will entirely become

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a Catholic-run city. The Local Government elections will be in October and he would be anxious to know whether the minority in the North would like these elections to be based on PR.

The Minister said that the important thing is to convert the minority from violence. The minority must have a proper opportunity for political expression. Mr. McCann intervened to say that, once the position of privilege of the majority is gone, it would be reasonable to expect that they would then begin to look for a new position in the scheme of things. If Constitutional and other inhibitions in the South, which would be irksome to them, were removed, would they not see their future in a different light. There are strong reasons why Britain should encourage the majority to think in terms of reunification e.g. the cost of the North to Britain, the loss of soldiers' lives, the fact that both countries are now about to enter the Common Market, and the fact that the existence of the Border strains relations between the two countries.

Mr. Whitelaw thought this a perfectly fair point to make. He said that the first thing to do is to detach moderate Protestant opinion from the acceptance of discrimination in their society. Sir William Nield intervened to say that it will be a question of convincing them that the discrimination they have is an abnormality.

Mr Whitelaw said he had seen four members of the Alliance Party on the previous day. That Party is dead against discrimination in any form. Indeed, he believes that a sizeable proportion of the moderate Protestant opinion

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see nothing wrong with the discriminatory set-up. The Vanguard people and the Stormont Ministers strongly favour maintenance of their position of privilege. Mr. Whitelaw believes that he will succeed in weaning away the moderates among the ex-Ministers. He must convince them, and the majority population as a whole, that discrimination does not pay.

The Minister intervened to say that if the Taoiseach were to make Constitutional and other changes with a United Ireland in view this would be a unilateral act on his part. Mr. Whitelaw replied that he could not say anything on this except that he believed that those of the majority who are against discrimination would be attracted by such a move.

The Minister then enquired whether it is still too early to increase North/South cooperation on economic matters. Mr. Whitelaw's reply was "lets think about that". Sir William Nield intervened to say that he thought it would be a bit early to make a move in that direction. Mr. Whitelaw said that a lot of the Northern civil servants are very good and remarkably free but this is not the case for all of them. He suggested that both sides keep in touch on the question of economic cooperation. His side will study the matter and will make known when they think a modest start could be made.

The Minister then brought up the question of communication between London and Dublin. He said that up to a few years ago there was no talk on Northern Ireland. When Oliver Wright was in the North there was a useful communications set-up. He then referred to what happened in Derry at the

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end of January and said it would have been very important for Dublin to have been forewarned that this was not part of a policy to be repeated. Without prior knowledge in a case such as that, it was conceivable that the Dublin Government could lose control. Mr. Whitelaw said he fully appreciated the Minister's point and that he would certainly see what could be done about it.

Sir William Nield said that the Secretary of State is being greatly hampered as long as IRA violence continues. The reaction of the IRA since the announcement of the initiative has been most unhelpful and embarrassing for Mr. Whitelaw. Sir Stewart Crawford intervened to mention the cross-Border movement of the IRA and the need for a stricter handling of them in the South and Mr. Whitelaw said that he would greatly appreciate anything that could be done by Dublin to bring prominent members of the IRA to justice. He went on to say that he believed that anything the Taoiseach could do about changes in our Constitution would be helpful and that the type of broad political speech which is in mind could also be useful.

The Minister called attention to the fact that, following previous meetings, reports appeared in the Dublin newspapers that the Minister got a dressing down about the IRA etc. He hoped that there would be no repetition of this and received the necessary assurance from Mr. Whitelaw. The Minister expressed the view that only a statement in very general terms should be made following his meeting with Mr. Whitelaw. The Secretary then read the text of the statement proposed to be issued by the Taoiseach in Dublin and it was regarded as fully acceptable.

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The Minister raised the question of future meetings.
Mr. Whitelaw felt that nothing definite should be
settled at this stage and that it would be preferable
to wait and see how the situation evolved.

This concluded the discussion.

D. J.
28/4/72