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**Title:** Report of a meeting of the Inter-Departmental Unit on Northern Ireland held on 24 July, 1974, at which topics of discussion included arrangements for a proposed Anglo-Irish meeting, the possibilities of military and other intervention in Northern Ireland by the Republic, likely flashpoint areas in the North, the locations of essential service centres in Northern Ireland, possible IRA [Irish Republican Army] takeovers, and the implications of negotiated repartition and of negotiated independence for Northern Ireland.

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## MEETING OF THE INTER-DEPARTMENTAL UNIT ON NORTHERN IRELAND

24th JULY, 1974.

Secretary  
you may wish to see  
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## 1. The members present were:

Department of the Taoiseach: Mr. D. Nally (Chairman)

Department of Finance: Mr. L. Murphy (for Mr. T. Ó Cofaigh)

Department of Defence: Mr. P. Ó Murchú

Department of Foreign Affairs: Mr. S. Donlon

Messrs. W. Kirwan and V. Mulcahy, Department of the Taoiseach were also present. Mr. M. Donnelly, Department of Justice, who had received very short notice of the meeting, was unable to be present.

2. Mr. Nally explained that the purpose of the meeting was to consider the work programme arising from Government decisions on the Unit's Discussion Paper No. 2 and the Minister for Foreign Affairs Memorandum for the Government, dated 15th July, 1974. These decisions had been conveyed by minutes dated 18/7/1974 and 19/7/1974 (S.19137). It was desirable to decide a tentative allocation of tasks so that work could be commenced. The tasks of concern to the Unit were:-

- (1) consideration of the arrangements for the proposed Anglo-Irish security meeting
- (2) a further study in relation to the possibilities of military and other intervention in Northern Ireland by the Republic in situations specified and on assumptions set out in paragraph 3.13 and 3.14 of Discussion Paper No. 2, including the possibilities of the Irish Army setting up and maintaining buffer zones.
- (3) a further study in relation to likely flashpoint areas (paragraph 3.3 of Discussion Paper No. 2 refers)
- (4) a further study in relation to the location of essential services centres in Northern Ireland (paragraph 3.8 of Discussion Paper No. 2 refers)
- (5) an elaboration of Discussion Paper No. 2 to take account of possible I.R.A. takeovers
- (6) detailed studies of the implications of negotiated re-partition and of negotiated independence for Northern Ireland.

3. Mr. Nally outlined the background to the proposed Anglo-Irish security meeting. Mr. Donlon said that the British had been pressing the matter. Mr. Nally indicated that the Government had decided informally that the meeting should take place at Ministerial level, not before September, and should be preceded by a preparatory meeting at official level. It was agreed that arrangements for the meeting were primarily a matter for the Department of Justice, as the Department with primary responsibility for security. The Department of Foreign Affairs would act as a channel of communications with the British. The Department of the Taoiseach should be kept in touch with developments, particularly in view of the Taoiseach's

le in relation to the North and of the other security matters with which the Department was concerned. There was some discussion of tactics in relation to the likely British wish to have representatives from our Army present. It was agreed that it was primarily for the Department of Justice to adopt a position on this on consultation with the Department of Defence. Improved communications were likely to be an important topic at the meeting and ~~that~~ there could be security advantages to this part of the country in arranging more effective procedures in this area. Mr. Nally referred Mr. Ó Murchú to four papers forwarded by the British in connection with the meeting, copies of which had been sent to the Department of Defence, and suggested that Mr. Ó Murchú might consider getting advice from the Army on technical aspects of the papers, - to enable him to advise on the question of Defence participation at the meeting. What was important was that effective arrangements for security should emerge from the meetings. It was generally agreed that the meeting at official level might appropriately take place at the end of August or in the first week in September. Mr. Donlon said he would contact the Department of Justice in the matter with a view to early agreement on a date with the British for the official meeting.

4. In relation to the study referred to at (2) of paragraph 2 above, Mr. Nally referred to a conclusion reached in Discussion Paper No. 3 i.e. that military intervention in Northern Ireland by the Defence Forces could only be contemplated in a situation where inter-communal fighting was already so widespread that intervention could not make matters worse. He wondered what could usefully be added to that conclusion. There was general agreement with this conclusion. However, it was felt that the Army view on this matter, for the purpose of Discussion Paper No. 3, on the basis of the assumptions now being made e.g. re the possibility - however remote- of U.N. intervention, had necessarily been made under great pressure and that there would be value in asking the Army authorities for a considered assessment on the basis of the assumptions now agreed on. Following discussion it was agreed that the best starting-point for this study and the studies referred to at (3) and (4) of paragraph 2 above, would be to obtain up-to-date information on the distribution of population in Northern Ireland, distinguishing the minority and majority communities. Reference was made to various possible sources for this information, including the 1971 Census of Population in the North, the adjustments made to its results by the Department of Foreign Affairs on the basis of personal knowledge and of documentation of population movement since 1971, information which the Director of the Diocese of Down and Connor Relief Advisory Service had undertaken to collect and supply, similar information which might become available from relief organisations under diocesan sponsorship in other Northern dioceses, and SDLP estimates based on electoral registers. It was agreed that it would be unwise specifically to enlist SDLP aid in the matter. It was agreed that the Department of Foreign Affairs would pursue the matter on the basis of existing data, pending the receipt of information from Northern dioceses.

5. Mr. Kirwan mentioned that his Department could supply some information on the location of essential services centres. It was noted that Northern dioceses might help here - the Down, and Connor group had been asked to do so.

6. It was agreed that the Departments of Defence and Foreign Affairs and, subject to its agreement, the Department of Justice, should exchange and co-ordinate information in their possession which was relevant :

to the tasks in question. Mr. Ó Murchú agreed to establish what relevant information Military Intelligence possessed. Mr. Donlon mentioned that his Department was developing widespread contacts on the Loyalist/Unionist side in Northern Ireland.

7. In relation to the task referred to at (5) of paragraph 2 above, Mr. Donlon pointed out that Discussion Paper No. 2 did not deal in detail with the situation which could arise if the Provisional I.R.A. took over certain areas. Mr. Kirwan mentioned that the point had been made in previous discussions that such areas need not necessarily all be North of the Border. It was agreed that whatever steps were possible should be taken to make the creation of I.R.A. - controlled autonomous areas in the North less likely, e.g. by dealing only with ~~organisations~~ <sup>Church</sup> ~~as the Catholic Church~~ in relief matters. Mr. Nally said that the Department of Justice would be asked if estimates of the numerical strength of the I.R.A., particularly in the Republic, and especially in border counties of the Republic were available. It would be important for the Unit to consider generally any steps which could be taken now to avoid or discourage take-overs either by military ~~loyalty~~ <sup>Loyalty</sup> or military I.R.A. groups.

8. There was general agreement that the first of the contingencies mentioned at (6) of paragraph 2 above viz. negotiated repartition, was an unlikely outcome, although it was recognised that de facto repartition could be the result of inter-communal conflict following a British withdrawal. There was some discussion about the likely magnitude of movements and exchanges of population in the event of negotiated re-partition. Some members considered that, even with financial assistance, most members of the minority in East Ulster, and especially in Belfast, would not wish to move to West Ulster, or even to Dublin. The Unit referred to ~~on~~ the map of Northern Ireland, showing the estimated distribution of the majority and minority communities which had been associated with Discussion Paper No. 2. It was noted that the distribution made it difficult to distinguish clearly possible border lines for re-partition. It was agreed to consider three cases in this respect.

- (1) a case involving only small transfers to the Republic of areas such as Newry, the western part of Derry City and hinterland, and parts of South Armagh
- (2) a case involving the transfer of larger areas with Catholic majorities in Counties Tyrone, Fermanagh, (South) Down, (South) Armagh and Derry, and
- (3) a case involving broadly re-partition along the line of the Bann.

It was agreed to that the Department of Finance should attempt estimates of the cost of resettlement on varying assumptions about the possible extent of population movement. Also to attempt to assess public finance (taxable capacity, social welfare income) and economic aspects of the areas involved. It was recognised that much data would be unavailable at levels below county and that this might limit what could be done. It was agreed that the Departments of the Taoiseach, Foreign Affairs and Finance would undertake whatever work was possible on this study, but that progress would be limited until better information was available from the distribution of the population, study to be carried out by Foreign Affairs.

9. It was agreed that these Departments should also carry forward the study of negotiated independence. It was agreed that this was a much more likely outcome and was favoured by a lot of Protestant opinion in the North. A fundamental question was to establish whether a suitable system for guaranteeing the rights of the minority could be established in any such independent State. Mr. Donlon said that his Department would study the question of the various degrees of recognition that could be accorded to an independent Northern Ireland. It was agreed that the economic and financial viability of such a State should be studied, initially by the Department of Finance, drawing on work already done by Mr. Murphy.

10. Mr. Donlon mentioned that Professor Norman Gibson of N.U.U. was well qualified to do work in this area and that he would be available during the Summer vacation. He was a member of the National Economic and Social Council and was well known to Professor Loudon Ryan, the Council's Chairman. It might be possible for Professor Ryan or Dr. T. K. Whitaker or some other contact to get him to do a paper or deliver a lecture, say to the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society, which would be useful, even if it were not possible, because of the need for confidentiality, to give him terms of reference precisely in line with those of the Unit's study. It was agreed that members would consider whether and, if so, in what manner, Professor Gibson might be requested to do a study of this matter.

11. It was agreed that the next meeting of the Unit would be held at the end of August or early in September.

12. It was agreed that while membership of the Unit was confined to a single representative of each Department, members should feel free to bring to meetings colleagues who could contribute to them or benefit from attendance at them. The need for absolute confidentiality in the Unit's work was stressed again.

13. The following is the summarised list of initial tasks as it emerged from the meeting:-

<u>TASK</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE</u>
Provision of up-to-date information on distribution of population in Northern Ireland, distinguishing the minority and majority communities	Foreign Affairs
Elaboration of Discussion Paper No. 2 to take account of possible I.R.A. takeovers	Foreign Affairs, Justice, Taoiseach
Consideration of possible border lines for 3 cases of negotiated re-partition	Foreign Affairs, Taoiseach, Defence (if relevant information available to Army).
Estimates of costs of resettlement, in cases (3) of negotiated re-partition; assessment of further public finance and economic aspects	Finance
Negotiated independence: constitutional aspects	Taoiseach
Negotiated independence: economic and financial aspects	Finance
Possible degrees of recognition by Republic	Foreign Affairs

*asked  
Mr. Penker  
to try to  
speed up  
work  
on X, which  
is crucial  
to many of  
the other  
studies. X  
We cd. do  
with even  
a rough  
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