

NATIONAL ARCHIVES**IRELAND**

Reference Code:	2005/7/630
Title:	Note of a meeting between Garret FitzGerald, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the British Ambassador to Ireland, Arthur Galsworthy, on 20 May, 1974, at which the main points of discussion were discussions within the Northern Ireland Executive, the current situation in Northern Ireland during the UWC [Ulster Workers' Council] strike, the Council of Ireland, security in Northern Ireland, statements made by [William] Craig [leader of the Vanguard Unionist Progressive Party], the Law Enforcement Commission Report, and the recent car bomb attacks in Dublin and Monaghan.
Creation Date(s):	21 May, 1974
Level of description:	Item
Extent and medium:	8 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

CONFIDENTIAL*Head of meeting today by M/CA
21/5/74*

Note of meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs
and the British Ambassador, 20 May 1974

The Minister was accompanied by Mr. Paul Keating, Secretary, Mr. C.V. Whelan, Assistant Secretary and Mr. John Swift, Counsellor, Department of Foreign Affairs. The British Ambassador was accompanied by Mr. Kenneth Thom, Counsellor, British Embassy.

The Minister explained to the Ambassador that he had been contacted by journalists the previous (Sunday) evening who had assumed that he had arranged to see the Ambassador and for that reason he had arranged the appointment late on Sunday evening by a personal telephone call to the Ambassador. He then suggested to the Ambassador that he might wish to give an evaluation of the present situation in the North as he was aware that he had been in touch with Mr. Rees overnight.

Discussions within the Northern Ireland Executive

The British Ambassador said that he had in fact been speaking with Mr. Frank Cooper, Permanent Secretary, Northern Ireland Office in the absence of Mr. Rees. Despite the UWC strike, an Executive meeting would take place that Monday morning - Executive members were being collected by helicopters. Two issues would be discussed: (i) the rent and rates strike on which an inordinate amount of time had been spent last week; and (ii) the effort to obtain a consensus on the Council of Ireland in which the Secretary of State and Mr. Cooper were now participating. Cooper had told the Ambassador that there was general agreement that they should start with a "co-operative council - the embryo of a Council of Ireland".

Agreement could be reached on matters in which "co-operative action" could take place. However, the Executive were not agreed as to when there would be movement to executive functions or to the second tier. Neither were they agreed as to whether this should be done by popular remit or what form any such test should take: by vote of the Assembly, by referendum or by a general election. The Ambassador referred to the difficulties the SDLP were having with their backbenchers who were resisting any "watering down" of the Council. The Faulkner Unionists were "down in the mouth" about the UWC strike. These attitudes and pressures made matters more difficult. All concerned however were utterly "fed up" with Roy Bradford's overnight statement on negotiation with the UWC.

The Minister intervened at this point to say that although we were willing to be guided by an Executive consensus we would expect some executive functions to be assigned to the Council of Ireland from the beginning. He also indicated that the establishment of the "second tier" (the Consultative Assembly) should not be made dependent on a vote in the Northern Ireland Assembly, a referendum or a general election, since this would present another hurdle to be overcome and another opportunity for a Loyalist rallying in opposition.

Security in the North

In dealing with the present security situation, the Ambassador recalled that Mr. Rees had announced shortly after assuming office that he hoped that the number of British troops then in Northern Ireland could be reduced. One battalion had already been sent home, a second battalion which was due to leave Northern Ireland on Wednesday next would not now be leaving; a further battalion was standing by in Britain and would be brought over to Northern Ireland, if its presence was felt to be necessary.

The Ambassador agreed with the Minister that this would bring the figure for British troops in Northern Ireland to the level which had existed before the change of Government. He added that military technicians were also available to take the place of striking workers if that proved necessary.

U.W.C. Strike

Regarding the present strike, the view of the British authorities was that the trade union movement should be given a chance to do what it could. If possible, it was desirable to have the U.W.C. broken by the trade unions rather than by the army. The Ambassador emphasised that the authorities were very concerned by the present level of intimidation; a difficulty was that persons were being intimidated indirectly and by telephone rather than by "chaps with sticks". Consequently, intimidation was very difficult to stop - unless the telephone service broke down!

The Minister asked if this meant that it was unlikely that the British authorities would act strongly immediately and that they would prefer to wait for a day or two before taking decisive action. If this was the case, was their position not made more difficult by the events of Monday morning - the blocking of roads, hijacking and burning of buses, etc.?

The Minister went on to say that he could not agree more with the programme of action envisaged for the strike; it was very close to his own note on the situation which read "stand firm but avoid confrontation". But it was necessary to distinguish the strike from the associated action on the streets. The Ambassador confirmed that their security people would be taking action as soon as possible on road blocks, etc., but their main concern regarding the strike was not to harden Loyalist feelings or to rally support to them.

The Ambassador asked had the Minister seen the recent TUC statement. The Minister read it and said it was a good statement.

Newtownabbey

Before dealing with the Law Enforcement Commission Report, the Minister raised a number of points of tactics and timing. He mentioned first that the Government were grateful for recent signs of activity by the security forces in Newtownabbey and similar areas. It was most important that such activity be prompt and visible; otherwise the Catholic population would revert to the 1969 situation of seeing the IRA as their only defenders.

Decision by Executive.

The Minister went on to mention that while he understood the psychological pressures action on the Assembly Unionists, which indicated to them that they should "go slow" on Sunningdale, it was equally true that if the strike was mastered there would be an important opportunity for advance. In these circumstances, it was better not to come to final decisions at once on tensions within the Executive. Such decisions could be strung out a little: the SDLP were clear on our views that it would be best not to come to a final decision over the next few days - until the strike situation had been settled.

Position of Mr. Craig

The Minister also said that we are very concerned about the tone and affect of statements made by Mr. Craig. This concern was shared by the public and by the Government here and representations had been made to us by Northern sources on the subject. He wondered what action could be taken regarding such statements, perhaps under the Incitement to Hatred Act.

He had previously mentioned a conversation with Liam Hourican in which Craig was reported to have anticipated outbreaks of sectarian violence later this year. We had no doubt that Craig was embroiled in such activity and that sectarian passions were being actively fomented. The Ambassador agreed that to talk of sectarian murder as "excusable" was abominable. However, if action was to be taken against Craig in the courts, the Government had to be certain that such action would be effective. If the Government lost such a court case, the position would be worsened. The Minister pointed out that we had taken such risks in respect of people like Máire Drumm. The difficulty was that Craig carried a greater load of personal responsibility than many people who are presently interned in Long Kesh. The Ambassador replied that he had already passed on such views to his authorities.

Timing of Statements

The Minister then raised the advisability of going ahead with a statement on the Law Enforcement Commission Report on Thursday next if the strike had not been broken by then. In such circumstances the impact of the statement could be lost in welter of other activities, and the opportunity to help strengthen Mr. Faulkner's position might be lost.

The Ambassador pointed out that there was an important practical consideration: Parliament rose for the Whitsun recess on the 24th and did not resume until the 10th June. In reply to a question, he confirmed that a statement had to be made in Parliament since Parliament would be immediately invited to pass the necessary legislation. The Minister asked whether Parliament could not be told this week that a statement in Parliament had been planned, but that for reasons outside the control of the Government it might have to be made during the recess. The Ambassador promised to put this point of view to Merlyn Rees and it was agreed that the situation could be reviewed again after his return from Belfast on Wednesday.

Regarding the announcement for a security meeting, the Minister pointed out that it also could now be wrongfully interpreted in

northern Ireland; it might be falsely held that we were pressing for a security meeting only because of the bombings in Dublin last week. We could, of course, announce that the question of such a meeting had been discussed before the bombings but that would not be very convincing. It was agreed that the timing of an announcement on the security meeting would also be reviewed after the Ambassador's return from Belfast next Wednesday. The Minister offered the use of a Government helicopter for the Ambassador's visit to Belfast if there were problems arising from blockades in the North at that time.

Statements on Report

The Minister then said he had some amendments to suggest to the draft statement to be made in Parliament by Mr. Rees on the Law Enforcement Commission Report. He handed over an amended statement, together with a note by the Attorney-General on paragraph 8 of the British draft. Later that afternoon, a further note on the reasons for our suggested amendments was also passed on to the Embassy. (For ease of reference, these three documents are attached.)

The Minister went through the draft statement in detail, as per the attached documents, noting the proposed amendments and the reasons for them. The Ambassador confined most of his comments to paragraph 6 of the British draft statement and especially to the wish of the British Government to say that it was a matter of regret to them that there was disagreement about the legality of amending Irish extradition law. He mentioned that the report had had a lukewarm reception in Belfast and that the immediate reaction of Unionists, even of Unionist members of the Executive, was that pressure should be put on Dublin to amend its laws on extradition. He emphasised that Mr. Rees felt strongly that he must include some regret that extradition was not acceptable; the phraseology proposed was the mildest way possible of expressing such a view. He thought that it would be quite unrealistic, in view of the pressure from members of the Executive and anticipated pressure from the House of Commons, to have all such expressions of regret deleted. He had discussed this

int in a preliminary way with Mr. Whelan on Friday last; he had already conveyed the substance of this preliminary conversation to his authorities and their reaction had been that it would be most difficult not to include some expression of regret that extradition was not available.

The Minister pointed out that if the statement was to be an agreed statement it must be completely acceptable to both sides. Mr. Whelan mentioned that we had already agreed not to down-grade extradition; in doing so, we had understood that neither side would go further in dealing with the subject. The Minister added that an agreed statement on extradition represented a position of strength in "selling" the extra-territorial method; if differences of view were apparent, as they would necessarily be if an expression of regret was included, this would be of no help at all in making a convincing case that the extra-territorial method would be effective. Besides, it was rather surprising to us that the emphasis both in the North and among some British officials seemed to be geared more to allowing opponents of the Sunningdale Agreement and power-sharing some degree of emotional release rather than concentrating on what had to be achieved.

The car bomb attacks in Dublin and Monaghan

The Ambassador enquired whether there had yet been any lead as to those responsible. He stressed that every possible assistance would be given by the security forces in the North and in Britain and he offered the secure lines of communication from the Embassy for the transmission of confidential information. He enquired whether our police had encountered any problems in arranging co-operation and he also asked whether the material used in the explosions had yet been identified. The Minister thanked the Ambassador for the full offer of co-operation and, following a check with the Department of Justice, the Ambassador was informed that as yet there was no lead to those responsible. The explosions were of

a "self-destruct" type and it had not yet been possible to identify the materials used. It was agreed that co-operation in this area involved the more sophisticated methods used in the North as a result of experience there would be particularly useful.