

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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Irish Embassy  
LONDON

NOTE

On receipt of Mr Donlon's telephone call I phoned Mr Mallet at the Foreign Office and said that I had conveyed to Dublin his message about the possibility of a brief quarter of an hour talk between the Taoiseach and Mr Callaghan during the course of the Heads of Governments' meeting. This had caused considerable concern and disappointment in Dublin. The Taoiseach's attitude was

- (a) that he could not treat his colleagues of the Nine in this way, that he would have to stay at the meeting, and
- (b) that he had much more to say to Mr Callaghan than could be contained in a 15 minute talk.

As a result the <sup>or</sup> arrangements could be "up in the air".

Mr Mallet said that he had thought in fact that this would be our point of view and was putting this case already to the Cabinet Office. He enquired if I was acting on instructions and I confirmed that I was.

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31/14

EMBASSY OF IRELAND

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31st March 1978

This is a note to confirm our telephone conversation today and to flesh it out. I called to see Philip Mallet at the FCO at 11 a.m. this morning. At that time he had had no indications from the Cabinet Office about the Prime Minister's views on the meeting with the Taoiseach in Copenhagen. The FCO had made some suggestions but they did not know how they would be received. At that time he did not expect a reply in the near future because he felt that Mr Callaghan would not turn his mind to the question of the meeting until after his brief holiday in Washington.

The Foreign Office had recommended that the meeting with the Taoiseach should take place on the morning before the Danish lunch for Heads of Government which would open the Copenhagen meeting. They envisaged the meeting would take about an hour. They also felt that it would be possible for both the Taoiseach and Mr Callaghan to arrive somewhat in advance. Alternatively, it might be possible to organise a breakfast meeting but Mallet indicated to me a certain lack of enthusiasm for this.

I then put to him our views on the possible time and place of the meeting. I said that we had thought that perhaps the best time might be around 4 o'clock on the afternoon of 8th April. As far as I was aware we had not considered an earlier arrival in Copenhagen and I was not sure how feasible this would be but I would report back and see what our reaction was. I indicated however that I thought that we would not particularly favour a breakfast meeting.

I mentioned that we had not strong views about the place where the meeting might take place and that we felt that it should be possible to hold it in either of the delegation rooms. Mallet seemed to go along with this suggestion.

/...

When I mentioned that the Taoiseach envisaged a tete-a-tete with Mr Callaghan with just note takers present Mallet said that he felt that this would be the Prime Minister's attitude but he was not sure whether or not Dr Owen might not also want to be present. I said that this would indicate a new interest in Northern Ireland affairs for Dr Owen and he said that his Minister had been rather upset at what he regarded as difficulties in our relationships in recent weeks and he was accordingly taking much more interest in this meeting.

I then mentioned <sup>our view</sup> ~~the items~~ on the agenda and this seemed also to coincide with Mallet's views.

It therefore appeared when I left him as if there was general agreement about the nature of the meeting and the only problem was to set up a time for it. However, when I got back to the Embassy I received a call from him after about 15 minutes had gone by in which he said he had now got a message from the Cabinet Office which had crossed with his account of my call. The Prime Minister had indicated that he did not want to have a breakfast meeting and he did not want to go early but that he would like his people to make arrangements for the Taoiseach and himself to see each other for 15 minutes or so during the course of the regular meeting. I expressed some surprise and concern about this and said that I thought that such a short meeting would not be at all helpful and would certainly have an effect on the possibility of other meetings. It was not at all clear that it would be possible to find time in this way and the danger existed that if we were to proceed on this kind of assumption no meeting would in fact take place. I felt this would be very unhelpful.

Mallet then suggested that there had <sup>been</sup> at least a considerable amount of common ground about the nature of the agenda of the talks and the possible attendance at them. Our contacts had been preliminary ones and he would report my reaction and would be glad if I would report their's, which I undertook to do.

While I was in his Office I availed of the opportunity to discuss with Mallet the general situation. I pointed out that due to propagandist statements there was considerable irritation in both London and Dublin. There could possibly be a basic element to be clarified and solved in the security field which was creating difficulties but it was better to do this calmly than to get unnecessarily angry about it and as a result we now had a situation where the original cause of irritation was not the only basis of our difficulties. There was <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ further difficulty of the <sup>ir</sup> ~~ir~~ritation which had arisen. He said that he thought we should understand that the irritation was not just on Mr Mason's part <sup>but</sup> ~~and~~ that there was serious concern on the part of the British Government whose viewpoint was expressed by Mr Mason. I said that this might very well be but that also I had to assure him that there was very considerable irritation in Dublin at the way Mr Mason had handled matters. We were prepared to be relaxed about it since the Government's position in Ireland was very strong and supported not just by its own party which had had such a remarkable electoral success but also by the main opposition party. In this it differed from the British Government which was obviously in a pre-election situation and so had less freedom to manoeuvre. The Government had taken this factor into account but nonetheless there was considerable irritation about tactics which had been pursued and which had all the appearances of being an attempt to find an alibi for other difficulties.

Mr Mallet then said they had sent word to Dublin to let us know that Mr Mason would not now think it useful to have a meeting with our Minister before the Copenhagen meeting. He said that this would not be unwelcome to us and I agreed that it might not be useful to have two meetings close to each other. Mr Mallet said that they did not intend to give any formal reply to our Minister's last letter and that you would be told this in Dublin also.

The question then <sup>arose</sup> ~~became~~ ~~than~~ of Ministerial meetings and of our objection to the presence of the Chief Constable. He said that Mr Mason is very anxious to have a meeting with

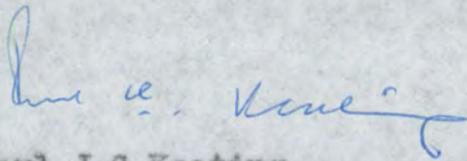
the Minister for Justice. To this I replied that it was a great pity that the existing arrangements for periodical meetings between Ministers had fallen through. We had been most anxious to continue them but Mr Mason had found it impossible for the past year to come to Dublin. We felt that these meetings should follow the pattern which had been worked out not just with the Labour but also with the conservative administration and which had basically a three item agenda. Obviously as circumstances changed one or other of these items on the agenda could loom larger in meetings but the system was such that no presentational problems arose and the discussions could be presented calmly in a neutral way. Mr Mason had indicated an interest in talking about security but not about anything else. This represented a departure from previous agreements and a failure to recognise what had been recognised before and that was our legitimate interest on what was happening in the North of Ireland. These matters were of considerable importance to us and the present attitude shown by the Secretary of State made talks very difficult.

With regard to the Chief Constable we preferred operational talks to be separate from political talks and I was not aware that the existing arrangements under which the Chief Constable and the Garda Commissioner had broken down or if they had broken down why they had done so. <sup>met periodically</sup>

Mallet then suggested that the Garda Commissioner had indicated that he wished to postpone a meeting with the Chief Constable until he was more read into his new job. I said that I knew nothing about this. I must say that Mallet gave me the impression that by making this plea the Commissioner was using it as an excuse to depart from an established pattern. In all fairness he was not explicit about this.

We touched briefly, I should have said earlier, on the question of publicity and press arrangements of the meeting between Heads of Government and I said that this was obviously

something we would have to consider in advance <sup>so that</sup> ~~and from~~  
our side there should not be any misunderstanding and <sup>we will answer</sup>  
that there should not be any similarity to the Munich  
meeting in this regard.



Paul J G Keating  
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