

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2009/135/703
Creation Date(s):	9 May 1979
Extent and medium:	10 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
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Courtesy Call on British Prime Minister, 10th May, 1979.

Summary Notes

1. The call will last half an hour. It is unlikely, therefore, that matters of substance can be fully discussed. The main headings which could come up are likely to be:-

- (1) NORTHERN IRELAND
- (2) EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY and
- (3) MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS.

NORTHERN IRELAND

2. There are fuller notes in the papers attached. The essential point is that normality cannot be restored by security measures alone. There has been violence in Northern Ireland in every decade since the 1920s and aiming at a purely "security" or "military" solution will only continue or exacerbate that instability.

3. Again, invocation of the rights of the majority in a democracy or comparisons with Rhodesia are irrelevant. The majority in Northern Ireland is a minority in the United Kingdom; and is also a minority in Ireland. Further, past discrimination by the majority under the Stormont regime is a reason for the continuing instability in the area. There is evidence of continuing discrimination in appointments and in administration even now in Unionist dominated local authorities - though there is not much point now in rubbing these particular sores, certainly in public. The main point is the minority could not identify with an administration from which they were excluded and to which they could never hope to be a part. In this sense, Northern Ireland is totally different from Britain or indeed any other democracy. The same instability will recur if any new form of

administration is set up which totally excludes the minority from power. This is why partnership or powersharing - however it is called - must be an essential element in any lasting settlement. Its absence can only lead the minority towards violence as the only answer. The first priority is to get the two parts of the Northern community living and working together.

4. Unionists have traditionally refused a solution on these lines and have even opposed the British Government attempts at a solution, first in the Curragh mutiny of 1914 and again, in May, 1974, following the Sunningdale settlement. These experiences have led them to believe that they can continue to exercise power, even against the will of the British Government and Parliament. Their belief is reinforced by the guarantees under the Northern Ireland Constitution Act, 1973, that -

"In no event will Northern Ireland or any part of it cease to be part of Her Majesty's dominions and of the United Kingdom without the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland voting in a poll held for the purposes of this section".

The penalties for the whole island of a direct confrontation on this issue are impossible to forecast but could not be otherwise than calamitous. That is why all official statements of policy have emphasised the need for progress by reconciliation: and why we have tended to emphasise the low profile projects for economic co-operation between North and South established following the meeting between the Taoiseach and Prime Minister Callaghan, in September, 1977.

5. The worth of the guarantee is slackening. The proportion of the total population in Northern Ireland represented by the minority religion is increasing; and on demographic

forecasts made admittedly on data some time ago, they will probably become a majority in Northern Ireland somewhere about the year 2020. This is not to imply that all Catholics would vote for an United Ireland: in polls in recent years a substantial proportion did not. However, the trend of history is clear and accentuates majority fears. This, in turn, aggravates their siege mentality: and leads to the politics of violence.

6. Progress can be made by action on security, so that the authority of both governments can be seen as being directed toward upholding the rule of law and the protection of life and property; partly by legislation and actions here, in the area of public morality, which contradict the impression that the South is a confessional State dominated by a single Church; and partly by economic advance in the South. However, the essential point is that responsibility for the present chaos rests with the British Government and it is for them primarily to find a solution but a solution cannot come without the co-operation of the two Governments and the consent of both parts of the community in Northern Ireland.

7. Such a solution is desirable in the terms of defence for the British, American and European Economic Community: but the major interest is obviously that of Ireland and the United Kingdom.

8. A solution is desirable on purely humanitarian grounds. Since the violence started, in 1969, about 2,000 people have been killed and 20,000 seriously injured. There is a continual drain on civilian, and security personnel alike.

9. The cost to the British Exchequer of running Northern

Ireland is about £1,000m. a year, more or less. In other words, about 50p in the pound of the income of the population there is met by British subventions.

10. The cost to the Irish Exchequer is about £64m. a year now. Proportionately this is an even greater burden than that borne by the British Exchequer. It is equivalent to about £1,600m. a year in British terms. And these figures do not include any assessment of the damage due to lost investment, lost tourism etc

11. For the people of Northern Ireland the economic effects have been even more devastating. These are not necessarily all due to the violence but must, *prima facie*, be blamed primarily on the fact of continuing instability which has blighted the area. In 1965, the Gross Domestic Product per head in the Republic was about three-quarters of that in Northern Ireland. Precise statistics are not available for the comparison of levels now but the best estimates point to a levelling of standards or possibly even a higher level in the South now.

12. Between 1970 and 1977 some 84,000 people emigrated from Northern Ireland. Here, with a population twice that of the area, net emigration was about 300, in the same period.

13. Industrial production in Northern Ireland rose by 4% since 1970. Here the corresponding increase was more than 40%. Industrial investment here is expanding rapidly: in Northern Ireland it is stagnating.

14. Agricultural production in Northern Ireland rose by 100% since 1970. Here output has gone up by more than 300%.

15. Northern interests in the European Economic Community are closer to those of the South than they are to those of Britain.

16. Whatever the statistics, the solution cannot simply be in economic terms, anymore than it can be in terms of security. It must come from political movement. It is difficult to say ^{how} _{th} is to be contrived or what form it should take but the ultimate objective, in the view of the Irish Government, must be the coming together of the people of Ireland, by consent, in reconciliation, and under agreed structures. The British Government could help in bringing about this end, to the benefit of all interests in the conflict, by indicating a willingness to encourage the peaceful unification of Ireland.

SECURITY

17. A major danger is that the British Government may look for a solution solely in the area of security and may be led to believe, particularly by army sources, that in some way, security efforts here are lax. On this, it may be no harm to point out that as against the 80 or so Irish "terrorists" in British jails, there are about 150/170 in Irish jails, of whom a significant proportion are from Northern Ireland. The problem is not that terrorists are coming from or finding a haven in the South but that they are coming from Northern Ireland because of the instability there.

18. The essential point to make, on security, would appear to be that often "over-kill" or unnecessarily dramatic speeches or statements can be counter-productive. If there is a suggestion to be made it should be made on a confidential basis and through the channels which have been set up for this

purpose. These channels are, on our information, working well. Certainly there are no complaints at police level about lack of co-operation.

19. A further point is that the border is only a small element in the campaign in Northern Ireland. At one time the British produced statistics showing only 2% of terrorist offences in Northern Ireland as being connected with the area. Following some controversy over the use of these statistics, the British have stopped providing them. However, even if the number of offences connected with the border is two or three times that level it still is not significant in the overall situation. Much of the violence occurs in Belfast, Ballymena, etc. miles away from the border.

20. The Government here have always been firm in their opposition to violence. They have operated the Offences Against the State Acts and set up special, non-jury, courts which have been operating since 1972. They outlawed the IRA as an illegal organisation long before this was done in the United Kingdom.

21. On 20th December, 1973, an Order was made under the Offences Against the Person Act, 1861, enabling a person suspected of murder or manslaughter in either the United Kingdom or Ireland to be tried where he was caught. No application has been received since that date by the Irish Government for the use of this provision. The Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act, was enacted in May, 1976. It permits of the trial of certain terrorist offences in the jurisdiction where the offender is caught. Since it was enacted there has been only one

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application to Dublin for its use; and in that case, the suspect returned to Northern Ireland where he was caught, tried, and imprisoned.

22. The Government cannot adhere to the European Convention on Terrorism for constitutional reasons. [It is often extremely difficult for British people to accept this. They cannot understand the position that the Supreme Court - or the people in a referendum - and not the Government, are the final arbiters in Constitutional issues]. The adherence of other countries to the Convention is not as worthwhile as it is often held out to be. For example, Germany will not extradite its own citizens. Denmark has declared that it will not extradite for a political offence. France has entered a similar reservation, etc. It was to get over these difficulties that a special agreement has been drawn up among the countries of the European Community permitting of extradition or trial (aut dedere aut judicare). The Irish Government will be signing this agreement.

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23. There have been suggestions, in recent contacts at official level, that a special crime squad should be set up in the Garda Siochana to deal with border and terrorist crimes. Our attitude on this is that it is a matter for police administration. The police here see no need for this type of special squad.

24. Another suggestion has been that there should be selective detention. ^{There are} ~~Towards~~ obvious dangers in this course.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

25. The new British Foreign Secretary has said that the incoming government would be taking "a very positive" attitude to the Community. This is welcome. The change of government may well afford the last chance for Britain to be ^{fully} integrated in the Community. As things have been in the past, it has been doubtful, whether or not the British were, in fact, fully committed - even the re-negotiation completed in the Dublin Summit of March, 1975 did not achieve finality and, under the Callaghan administration, there was always the doubt, if not the threat, of further "re-negotiations". A major concern of Community and Irish policy ~~policy~~ must be to ensure the further strengthening of British links with the Community. Both Ireland and the Community would be losers if the British were to pull out.

26. Our Presidency will commence on 1st July next. A major problem which will probably come up then will fact that the existing sources of Community finances will be exhausted by the early 1980's and new forms of taxation must be found. The previous British Government said that they would have difficulty in agreeing to new Community taxes unless and until the Common Agriculture Policy was reformed. Their new government will probably be trying to have the system of financing recast so that it reflects more closely the relative wealth of the different members. This would suit us. We will soon be contributing to the budget twice our relative SNP share.

27. The present Government may perhaps not be as abrasive about the CAP as the last government. The Community budget represents only about .7% of the GNP of the countries making up the Community. CAP, which costs .7% of this figure, is, therefore, not costly in Community terms. Much of the money spent by the Community on agriculture takes the place of spending on agriculture by national governments; and, in any event, the total of agricultural spending by national governments is, in fact, higher than Community spending under the CAP.

28. In the Community, industry enjoys the protection of the common external tariff. However, imports to the Community of the agricultural products in surplus are a major source of difficulty e.g. butter where imports are the equivalent of 7% of Community production as ^{against} ~~a joint~~ total Irish production of only 5%. In other words, much of the problem of surpluses is due to imports, undertaken by the Community under Treaty or other obligations. There is no similar soft-heartedness shown in relation to industrial imports like cars, steel, textiles etc.

29. On EMS, our experience has not been unsatisfactory. We are appreciative of the British decision not to impose exchange control against the Irish economy. The decision might well have gone otherwise if the Irish pound had strengthened appreciably against sterling and there had been substantial cash flows from the British economy to Ireland. With the development of a discount in the Irish currency, as against the British, the danger of these flows seems to have receded, and with it, the possibility of exchange controls. The danger is, however, that the British could hold up the regulations for a transfer of funds, under the EMS arrangements. They could do this on the grounds that Britain is a "less prosperous country" and, as such, is entitled to share in the funds provided for resource transfer in the December European Council. An argument against this is that, on a purchasing power parity basis, the

average income per head in the United Kingdom is approximately 93% of the Community average. (There is no need for us to press this argument excessively - it is better left for the French and the Germans). However, whatever reasons exist may not be sufficient to prevent the British from blocking the transfer of resources regulation- with the consequent ill effect for Ireland.

MISCELLANEOUS

30. Under this heading it might be no harm to mention forthcoming official contacts, either as President of the Council of the Community, or in any other capacity.

9th May, 1979.