

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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# ROINN AN TAOISIGH

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## Northern Ireland Policy

1. A meeting of officials of the Departments of the Taoiseach and Foreign Affairs took place in the Department of the Taoiseach on Tuesday 19th February for the purpose of reviewing current developments following the Taoiseach's Ard Fheis speech on the 16th February. The following were present:-

Messrs Nally, Kirwan and Murray, Department of the Taoiseach and Neligan, Swift and O hUiginn, Department of Foreign Affairs.

This note refers to the principal items covered in the course of discussions at that meeting.

### British reaction to Ard Fheis address

2. The meeting noted that most British editorial comment on the speech had been positive. Preliminary indications from the British Embassy would suggest that the speech had not caused alarm in that quarter. The only criticism received informally was to the effect that the speech made no reference to security co-operation.

### Taoiseach's meeting with British Prime Minister

3. The meeting was of the view that it would be important to get the precise timing of a meeting with the British Prime Minister right both by reference to progress at the Conferences in Northern Ireland and also the EEC discussions on the British Budget contribution. It was felt that if a meeting were sought immediately this might be refused on the basis that the Conferences in Northern Ireland were currently in session. Reference was also made to the statement by Mrs. Thatcher in her letter of congratulations to the Taoiseach, on his assuming office, when she indicated that she looked forward to meeting him at the next European Council Meeting. At that meeting it was most unlikely that a suitable opportunity would arise for a worthwhile discussion on Northern Ireland. It might be possible, however, on that occasion to arrange a further meeting to discuss Northern Ireland matters on a mutually suitable date. This aspect could be mentioned to the British authorities prior to the European Council Meeting at the end of March. It would appear that a date, following the adjournment or conclusion of the Northern Ireland Conference and prior to any further arrangements for Northern Ireland being presented to Parliament, might be the most suitable occasion all round. In the meantime the Minister for Foreign Affairs would have met the Northern Ireland Secretary of State (possibly early next month) and in addition he would be meeting with Lord Carrington in the near future.

## ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

-2-

### Circulation of Ard Fheis address

4. It was agreed that our Ambassadors would be requested to call on their respective Foreign Offices with a copy of the Taoiseach's Ard Fheis speech. It was suggested that they should direct the attention of Political Directors to the extract on Northern Ireland and ask for a reaction probably informally if this was considered to be the most appropriate course. The desirability of Ambassadors providing a backflow of reaction to the speech was also agreed. In the case of the Ambassador to the UK the meeting was of the view that if asked he might say that the Taoiseach would envisage a meeting with the British Prime Minister following the European Council in Brussels on the 31st March-1st April. In view of the Taoiseach's forthcoming visit to Paris on the 13th March it was suggested that Ambassador McCann should mention to the French authorities that the Taoiseach would be raising Northern Ireland with President Giscard d'Estaing in the course of their meeting and that

Giscard d'Estaing in the course of their meeting and that any reaction to this suggestion would be appreciated in advance of the meeting.

5. In regard to Germany the view was expressed that the authorities there might raise the question of greater participation by us in the sphere of European security. In previous contacts with the Germans this matter had been raised very tentatively on a number of occasions. While it was recognised that we could not "offer" NATO membership, as a quid pro quo for support of our Northern Ireland policy any readiness to plan a greater part in Western security might encourage the Germans to take a more active interest in a settlement on the Irish question. It was recognised that such a possibility was by no means immediate. In the case of the Olympics it might be said that we were looking for support from President Carter on Northern Ireland but were not, in turn, prepared to give his Government our support on Afghanistan and the Olympics. The possibility that this point of view might be raised with the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the course of his forth-coming visit to the United States was mentioned. Also relevant in this regard would be the Minister's recent statement on the role of the PLO. In this connection it was pointed out that there was a difference of approach as between the United States and European countries in general vis-a-vis the PLO.

6. The meeting considered that copies of the Taoiseach's speech should also be forwarded to Speaker O'Neill, Senators Kennedy and Moynihan and Governor Carey with a covering

# ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

-3-

letter from the Taoiseach in each case. The Department of the Taoiseach would look after this matter and would forward the letters through diplomatic channels for delivery by the Ambassador in Washington. It was agreed that the Ambassador might advise the Four Horsemen verbally of the Government's direction in relation to the action to be taken by Ministers at St. Patrick's Day Parades with a CAUCUS-NORAID Involvement. The desirability of the Embassy emphasising a positive rather than a negative approach in its presentation of the Government's policy on Northern Ireland was emphasised. The Embassy could suggest to the Four Horsemen that the Taoiseach's speech provided a positive approach to the difficult problem of Northern Ireland and express the hope that it would be of guidance to the Horsemen in understanding the Government's thinking on the current situation.

## Community Assistance

7. The meeting considered briefly the possibility of the European Community providing assistance towards the solution of the Northern Ireland problem. In this regard current negotiations in relation to the British Budget contribution were of relevance. The possibility of the British Budget being relieved of an amount equal to the costs of their getting out of Northern Ireland was also discussed. If a scenario on these lines arose a large-scale scheme based proportionately on the concept of the Marshall Plan would be the ideal. However, if Britain was unwilling to move then it was extremely unlikely that such a plan would be forthcoming. It was, at the same time, recognised that the French might have a difficulty of principle in this matter even if Britain were prepared to alter her existing policies. In conclusion the meeting agreed that while there was no reason to expect any early developments in this sphere Community involvement in the solution of the Northern Ireland situation at a future date should by no means be ruled out.

## Speeches on Northern Ireland

8. The desirability of co-ordinating speeches on Northern Ireland was discussed particularly in relation to statements which Ministers might be making at or around St. Patrick's Day. The view of the meeting was that all such speeches should be aligned on what the Taoiseach had said in his Ard Fheis address. The Department of Foreign Affairs would be preparing an appropriate general brief for issue to Ministers travelling abroad at that time.

## Security measures agreed in London on 5 October 1979

9. The Department of Foreign Affairs had been advised

# ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

-4-

by the British authorities that in the light of progress made on technical discussions between our respective security forces, they regarded the agreement of the 5th October last as now in operation. It had been represented to the Department of Foreign Affairs that the British side would, as the exigencies might require and in accordance with the formula agreed, be going ahead with helicopter overflights should the need for such an overflight arise.

[Foreign Affairs were asked afterwards, on the Taoiseach's direction, to request the British to defer action until the meeting on 4th March between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.]

## Northern Ireland Studies

10. It was agreed that a further meeting should be held at an early date to discuss the economic, financial and constitutional etc. studies which would need to be updated at this stage. A working group was set up for this purpose. The desirability of clarifying the situation as regards the work carried out by the Fianna Fail Study Group was also mentioned.

*J.H.*

March, 1980.

4

*he was forwarded to Messrs Heligan, Swift and O'Higgins D/A.A.*