

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2013/27/1592
Creation Date(s):	30 September 1982
Extent and medium:	2 pages
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Access Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

Thus steps could be taken by the British Government to recognise the Irish identity of a third of the Northern Ireland population within the present political context, and the problem of security, and of the alienation of the minority from the forces of order might be met by creating at an early point a new police force and Court to deal with violence throughout the island, under the joint control of Governments in both parts of Ireland or of the Irish and British Governments.

None of this, short-term or long-term, would be easy of achievement. The fears of the unionist population are too deep-seated to be removed quickly or easily by any arrangement, however tailored to meet their concerns. That is why an Irish Government has a duty to take initiatives in respect of matters within its own control, in order to effect such changes within its own State as will demonstrate its sincerity to the Northern Unionists and provide a model for the kind of State and society that might be envisaged for the whole island in the future.

Moreover, in doing this an Irish Government should be prepared, together with the other Parties in the Dail, to consult with all those in Northern Ireland who may be willing to talk to us, however informally, whether they be organised in political parties or not, and whether they seek, oppose, or (less probably!) are indifferent to the development of a new political relationship between North and South.

We must seek in discussion with all in Northern Ireland who may see merit in reducing the tensions within our island, their help in identifying those aspects of the Constitution, laws and social arrangements of our State, which pose obstacles to understanding amongst the people of our island.

This model for approaching what is certainly an intractable problem has perhaps some relevance to broadly analogous intractable political problems in other parts of the world. The solution to many such problems must, I feel, involve on the part of each protagonist a willingness to attempt to understand what moves and motivates the other - to dig under the surface of antagonistic political rhetoric in order to discover the reality of the fears and tensions that lie beneath - and to seek to accommodate these fears and tensions in whatever model for a solution is proposed, without flinching from any consequent political complexity.

Reconciliation of a divided community cannot, I believe, be accomplished otherwise. We in Ireland have the opportunity to attempt to resolve one of the world's most difficult political problems by such an approach. We may not succeed, but it is right that we should try and that in so doing we break any new ground that may be necessary, perhaps thereby pointing a way forward for other peoples who face equally intractable and, in some respects at least, analogous problems.