

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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Anglo-Irish Exchanges  
Meeting of 2 and 3 November 1984

The meeting began in Iveagh House at 5.00 p.m. on Friday, 2 November 1984, and continued over dinner. It recommenced at 10.00 a.m. on 3 November and continued through lunch and thereafter until about 5.00 p.m.

On the British side were: Sir Robert Armstrong of the Cabinet Office, the British Ambassador, Alan Goodison, Mr David Goodall of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Sir Tony Brennan and Mr John Bourne of the Northern Ireland Office.

On the Irish side were: Mr D. Nally, Mr Sean Donlon, Mr A. Ward, Mr D. Quigley, Ambassador N. Dorr and the undersigned. *the both sides wd. accept that all we were saying was still without commitment*

Mr Nally opened the exchanges by stressing that *(we saw the process essentially as a cooperative effort. We were anxious that whatever emerged might be acceptable over as wide a spectrum of opinion as possible.*

He said that there were certain issues which had been difficult on the previous occasion, notably the form and function of the Ministerial Commission, those of the Security Commission and those of the Courts. The fact that we are not specifying issues such as the electoral law problem which resulted in Mallon being deprived of his seat and the Flags and Emblems Act should not be taken as an indication that we are not conscious of them. He suggested that we might attempt to cover all of the points in the discussion as quickly as possible and also the Statement of Principles.

Armstrong said that the British side regretted not having been able for reasons beyond their control to give us a piece of

*desirable and workable in the sense that it was*

*aimed at producing what most people would see as a desirable structure*

*So that we covered all yet the overall picture at present*

*peace and stability*

paper. This had only become possible in the previous day or two when they had had a full discussion with the three Ministers concerned: the Prime Minister, Hurd and Howe. The British side now felt "fully instructed and briefed", and "we come to you with a bit of paper".

*(for both documents)*  
Armstrong continued that since the previous meeting there had been one or two indications that the Irish side might have certain doubts about the position of the British Government. However, "we are here and continuing the talks" as a result of a "clear and considered decision to which our Ministers are party". "The more we get down into discussions the more we realise that we are going to have to face very difficult decisions." As against that view, the British side are convinced that if we can proceed with the exchanges - "on a cooperative basis as you say" - there is now a need to do this and <sup>perhaps</sup> an opportunity. He went on to say that we are very much in the shadow of the next Summit and that the British side would like to discuss arrangements.

Armstrong, continuing, said that we have now got to the point where, before we can "progress" these points between us, it is right that we should establish how far we have got; where is the common ground; where are the difficulties. The British believe we must both face these issues clearly, put them on the table for our Prime Ministers. They are going to have to decide. Do they wish things to continue. The present British view is that they do want to them to continue. The British side have produced a paper which in one sense fulfills the remit they undertook: it attempts to describe the position both sides had reached. They would like to go through that paper with great care. This could be described as an interim summing up stage in which we identify the issues which the two Prime Ministers will address.

The British side believe there is no prospect of the two Heads of Government being able to say at the end of the Summit: This is what we have agreed; we have agreement. We must aim to be able to do that in the weeks and the months that follow. The

Summit will hopefully provide a re-affirmation of the political will to go forward and some indication of how we both proceed to resolve the issues that are identified. The British side do not disagree with the three criteria put forward by the Irish side of "adequate, transparent and durable". The arrangements must also be acceptable, such that they can be presented with conviction to those outside who are directly concerned and such that they will not provoke a 1974 situation. <sup>what is required is a judgement for</sup> ~~The~~ politicians ~~after all~~ will carry the weighty responsibility here and they will have to decide.

Nally said that the Taoiseach is deeply concerned to end alienation and to create a platform for constitutional politicians on both sides in Northern Ireland. It is particularly important, coming up to the local elections of next year, that we do not end up with a situation whereby ~~Spain~~ <sup>those</sup> ~~Fein~~ will be given a new opportunity. <sup>who ~~do~~ believe in violence</sup>

Armstrong said that there were important timetable problems. Even if it were possible to emerge from the Summit with an agreed set of proposals it would remain to deliver on a process of implementation on both sides, something which could not be completed in short order. With the best will in the world it would not be possible to have something working on the ground before the elections. The great problem will be implementation.

Nally asked whether another meeting might be envisaged early in the New Year.

Armstrong said Yes - around that time.

Nally said the conference idea may also emerge. He added that we are deeply concerned that recent violence should not be seen to have stopped the two Governments from proceeding.

Armstrong said that British Ministers will not be bombed away from the table nor will they be bombed to the table.

Goodall then began to introduce the British position paper. He said it was a paper which had been prepared for British Ministers for the meeting of last week. It attempted to set out what the positions were, where there is agreement and where there is divergence. He said that the object of the meeting was primarily to be told by the Irish side where the British had misrepresented the Irish position.

Armstrong said that the paper would have to be handled very carefully. It was a British paper intended for briefing British Ministers so that the British team of advisors would be able to say to them "This accurately represents the Irish side's position as well as ours".

At this stage, Armstrong handed over a number of copies to the Irish side who withdrew for a period to read the document.

Work then commenced on the "negotiation" of the British document. This took the form of continuing exchanges about detail and substance for the rest of the evening. On Saturday morning, 2 November, the two teams broke into three sets of negotiating teams with Nally and Donlon together with Armstrong dealing with the draft communique and the arrangements for the Summit; Ward and Quigley together with Bourne and Brennan dealing with the paragraphs on security; and Dorr and the undersigned together with Goodison and Goodall dealing with the paragraphs on objectives and political institutions.

On Saturday morning, 3 November, there was a brief meeting of the Irish side and it was decided, in the light of the unacceptable character of much of the British document in its original state, to propose to the British side that the Irish side would attempt to produce a draft of a joint paper to be put jointly to the two Governments - the draft to be brought to London during the coming days. Should that idea fail, it was decided to propose to the British that the Irish side would produce an internal Irish paper for the purpose of briefing Irish Ministers which would be shown to the British perhaps

within a week with a view to ensuring, with their assistance, that British views were accurately reflected in it.

There was a brief plenary on Saturday morning at which the British said that they could not contemplate the production of a joint paper at this stage but that they would be happy to cooperate on the basis of the alternative Irish proposal. That was therefore agreed.

In the event and following several sessions of the working parties referred to above and the concluding plenary, the original British draft was, in the view of the Irish side, improved quite considerably.

Copies of the original draft and the improved draft are attached. Also attached are some comments on the exchanges themselves and their implications.

M.J. Lillis

6 November 1984

c.c. Taoiseach  
Tanaiste  
Minister  
Secretary  
Mr Nally  
Mr Ward  
Mr Quigley  
Ambassador, London