

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2015/89/91
Creation Date(s):	17 September 1985
Extent and medium:	6 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

Meeting of Minister for Foreign Affairswith Secretary of State King 17.9.85

The meeting began with an exchange in the presence of officials at 11.30am and continued in this mode until 12.45pm. This was followed by separate meetings over lunch between the Minister and King on the one hand, and between officials on the other. Mr. King accompanied by the Minister had a meeting with the Taoiseach at 2.30pm. This report deals only with the first part of the programme i.e. the exchanges between Mr. King and Mr. Barry with officials present. The officials on the British side were the British Ambassador, Robert Andrew, Permanent Secretary of the NIO and King's Private Secretary. The Minister was accompanied by the Secretary and the undersigned.

The Minister welcomed the Secretary of State and his party to Dublin.

King thanked the Minister for his welcome and said he would like to set out his present position. He wanted to emphasise that there would be no change whatever in the approach of the British Government to Northern Ireland or to the Anglo-Irish negotiations. He said that he was absolutely committed to the Anglo-Irish process. He hoped "we can get an agreement and carry it forward". He said this was a very difficult undertaking as the Minister would know better than himself. There were great emotions and loyalties involved which must be handled with intelligence and sensitivity. He wanted to see a strengthening of relations between the UK and Dublin, to accommodate the aspirations of both communities in Northern Ireland, to promote cooperation on security and to promote the prospects for employment (recalling his earlier Departmental responsibilities) for the whole island. He was absolutely persuaded that what the two Governments were embarking on was

right. He understood that the Minister was obviously concerned about the minority and wanted to see ways which could give them greater confidence. The Minister had also clearly recognised the fears of unionists: this had been recognised in the Forum and in the Minister's various statements since then. The Minister had recognised the "unrealism" of dragooning unionists into a united Ireland against their will. The British Government had given undertakings which were now enshrined in Article 1 of the draft agreement in all its parts. It was against that background that he was looking at developments and was very interested in the Minister's views.

If we achieve an agreement his own first and major challenge would be the unionist reaction. He would hope that neither side would overplay the significance of the agreement in the first instance. He would hope that we would not seek a major presentation, looking for plaudits purely for our own side. As he had often said to Howe, he must look not just at "great landmarks", but at workability. If it works out he understood that he and the Minister would find themselves working side by side. He would hope that they could jointly start in a low key and measured way, not impetuously, so that there could be a period of reassurance which would make the subsequent work easier. He would hope that there would not be a great Secretariat producing a massive programme, even though the Secretariat was an important part of the business. His side was attaching importance not only to the "external relationship" but also to internal development. He hoped that it would be possible to achieve devolution so that he could get out of certain parts of his area of responsibility (i.e. leaving it to the devolved authority), certainly not on a majority rule basis but not necessarily on a straight power-sharing basis. Hume had told him the previous evening that he would sit down with the unionists, not with total pessimism as to what might be possible. In other words King hoped for an agreement without major and instant knee-jerk reactions from unionists and also with the possibility that we

could get something going on a devolutionary basis. It was also important for him to be able to demonstrate that there is some benefit to unionists in the deal, notably on status but also on security.

The Minister said that King had demonstrated that he had absorbed his brief very well indeed. He understood what King had meant by a "soft launch". As to nationalist opposition it would be extremely important that the presentation would not lead to a repeat of the aftermath of Chequers which had caused serious damage to the Taoiseach from which the Taoiseach had now recovered. (King agreed.) If the arrangement goes ahead, King and he would have to have considerable confidence in each other, "keeping our noses together, close to the grindstone". (King kept nodding at this). The problem on the nationalist side was to dispel the sense of second class citizenship which had been imposed on them for sixty years. It was necessary to have the closest possible coordination in the effort to dispel this.

King intervened to say that it was essential that the Secretariat be kept at a low key level.

The Minister said that it would be necessary in the effort to withdraw support from the Provos, particularly in West Belfast, that the Irish presence should be visible. He would have to walk through that area occasionally so that people would be aware that there was someone else other than the Provos to whom they could talk.

King suggested that there might be problems about "major walkabouts".

The Minister said that he would be strongly opposed to the concept of "major walkabouts" but that his presence would have to be known about.

King said that the process would have to be even-handed and balanced. Such ideas as the Minister had mentioned would have to be balanced by measures on the other side e.g. major successes achieved through security cooperation.

Joint Courts

King said that the British side had produced new wording on the "mixed courts". The British are prepared to look at the concept. Speaking personally he was very dubious indeed about the possibility of making progress on this matter. He felt that it was his duty to be extremely frank about this. His problem was going to be under the heading of "sovereignty". He felt that he could defend the agreement as it stood in relation to that difficulty, but the concept of mixed courts would be much more difficult. This might be the straw which might break the camel's back. He had spoken to Hume about this and had had the impression that this was not as important to Hume as it was to Dublin. He was concerned about the implications for public opinion arising from a 2:1 situation on the bench; nationalists might feel that in every instance where a nationalist was "sent down", the Southern judge had been in a minority. If the existing wording was extremely important for Dublin the British would maintain it. The whole agreement was of course ad referendum to the Government and Parliament.

The Minister said that there was a very great difficulty over the years in the attitude of nationalists to the courts and he instanced the remarks of Judge Gibson.

Andrew said that the problem seemed to be more in the area of the obiter dicta of the bench rather than the verdicts.

The Minister sought clarification of King's remarks about the agreement being ad referendum to Parliament.

Lillis intervened to say that experience in the South had demonstrated that there need be no difficulty about the 2:1 situation and he also mentioned the argument that the problem of "sovereignty" was overcome by the reciprocity involved.

The Minister and the Secretary mentioned the problem of membership of the two senior courts.

King said again that Hume did not seem to attach as much importance to "mixed courts" as Dublin.

UDR

King said that the first problem was that the British would not wish to be seen to be making changes at this stage at the request of Dublin. Their policy was however to put the RUC in all cases in the front line, backed as necessary by the military.

The Minister intervened to say the RUC had performed a useful service on Portadown and related issues and explained in detail the problem of the UDR and the nationalist community. In particular he pursued the point about the part-time members.

Andrew said that the problem about part-timers was they were necessary for night-time and weekend duty.

The Minister said that it was precisely the night time and weekends which gave rise to problems.

King said that they were committed to providing additional training of the UDR as well as additional regular army personnel. He added that the British were looking at this whole area to see whether there was further scope for action. He undertook to "take away" and examine the problem of part-timers.

Security Co-operation

King asked whether the Government were prepared to provide a "task force".

The Minister said "yes".

The Secretary added that it was worth examining the question of whether the presentational advantage of a "task force" might be outweighed by some other form of deployment of extra resources.

M.J. Lillis
17.9.85

c.c. Taoiseach
Tanaiste
Minister
Minister for Justice
A.G.
Secretary
Mr. Nally
Mr. Ward
Mr. Quigley
Ambassador London