



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Taoiseach's meeting with the Prime Minister Mrs. Thatcher

GENERAL STEERING NOTE

Arrangements

The meeting will probably take place on the first day of the European Council. The British side envisage that it will last about a half-hour. It would be usual for one official on each side to be present. No comment is to be made to the press by either side on the topics discussed but a short press communique may be issued in accordance with custom.

We understand from the British Ambassador that the Prime Minister's principal concern will be security and measures to defeat the IRA. The Prime Minister will concentrate on three points- security, the unionists and the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The Ambassador has also said separately that the British hoped that the Taoiseach would not put forward any very large scale schemes such as for a round-table conference.

General Topics

This is the first such meeting since the Irish and British General Elections and since the Irish Single European Act Referendum. The British Ambassador has informed us that the British attach importance above all to a resumption of good personal relations between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach. They do not see it, therefore, as a substantive meeting, though substantive matters would inevitably arise.

The Secretariat in Belfast are informed that PM Thatcher is being briefed on security co-operation and being advised to look to further progress in the future rather than recount the

experience thus far. On the political front, the Prime Minister is being briefed on the importance attached both to dialogue between the parties in Northern Ireland and to devolution. In general, the British side believe that there is little likelihood of serious talks between the Unionists and the British Government before the autumn. The British Government's most recent policy indication is contained in the Queen's speech on the opening of Parliament on 25 June emphasising three aspects; (a) to seek an agreed basis on which greater responsibility can be devolved to representatives of the people; (b) to work unremittingly for the defeat of terrorism; (c) to build upon the constructive relations established with the Republic of Ireland in security and other matters. The British Ambassador explained that the absence of a reference to the Anglo-Irish Agreement was not to be construed as indicating any lessening of the degree of commitment by Mrs. Thatcher and her Government to the Agreement.

The Taoiseach could stress his desire to have good relations between the two Governments in all aspects - matters affecting Britain and Ireland, north-south relations and relations in the wider European and international sphere. He could refer to the publicly declared intention of his Government to operate the Agreement, to do so through the Intergovernmental Conference and across the range of agenda items - political, security and economic, including cross border security cooperation.

Specific Topics

- the post-electoral political situation in Northern Ireland with Mrs. Thatcher showing interest in the possibility of unionist political movement and the possibility of devolution;
- cross-border security cooperation;
- the work of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the Conference;

- and possibly relations between the security forces and the nationalist community and the administration of justice in Northern Ireland with possible reference to the Extradition Act (Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism) 1987;

After the informal exchanges at the beginning, the Taoiseach might take the initiative and suggest discussion of the post-electoral situation in Northern Ireland (including the unionist position) as a topic where both sides have a common interest and need for discussion.

The Post-Electoral Situation in Northern Ireland

The electoral result is evidence that the objective of the Anglo-Irish process, in reducing nationalist alienation, is gradually being achieved. On the nationalist side, the Sinn Fein vote has been further eroded. The SDLP gained an extra seat (McGrady) and their overall share of the nationalist vote increased from 52% in 1983 to 60 % in 1987. In Derry the Sinn Fein vote was the lowest ever. In Newry-Armagh the SDLP share of the nationalist vote rose from 61% in 1983 to 79% in 1987. Nonetheless, West Belfast, the only important constituency where the Sinn Fein vote slightly increased (by 483 votes over the 1983 figure) shows the need to maintain the political momentum in the Conference so that nationalists in that area can be convinced that the Anglo-Irish process through the Conference can advance their interests.

Mrs. Thatcher is likely to sound out our views on getting the unionists involved in the political process. The Taoiseach could make the following points:

- there are positive signs from the unionist side, arising from the realisation that their "Ulster Says No Campaign" has been counter productive, the signals from the unionist electorate to that effect, and the decision by unionist M.P.s to take their seats at Westminster. The

OUP-DUP Task Force report is now in the hands of the Unionist leadership. While there is disagreement about what to do about the report, it may act as a spur to political movement;

- the present time (with the marching season about to begin) is not the most suitable for political movement, given that some unionists intend to continue to defy the law, e.g. in Portadown where there will be a religious march on 5 July and an Orange Parade on 12 July. Local unionists there have signalled that they will not comply with the Government's regulations on marches - these now require seven as opposed to five days notice.

- Unionists continue to insist that the Anglo-Irish Agreement cease to be implemented and the Maryfield Secretariat closed as a precondition to negotiations;

- Molyneaux, the British believe, will not lend his authority to ideas involving devolution, to which he is 'adamantly' opposed. Despite the fact that integration has been repeatedly and emphatically rejected by Secretary of State King in statements in the House of Commons, the OUP continues to have an active integrationist wing;

- Paisley, though not ideologically opposed to devolution, will find it difficult to extricate himself, should he wish to, from his demand that the Agreement be suspended and the Secretariat closed. Neither will he want to find himself outflanked by his Deputy Leader, Peter Robinson;

- it may prove necessary to wait and see how Unionist thinking develops over the summer. The SDLP believe that, at present, Unionists seem to be engaged in trying to outflank the SDLP rather than in any genuine political dialogue;

- the two Governments should, nonetheless, regard positively any constructive moves that the unionist leaders may make;
- the two Governments should work very closely together if at some time in the future there is a need to respond to proposals put forward by the unionist side;
- the two Governments can restate their position, as the need arises, that there can be no question of interfering with the Agreement, or the work of the Conference or Secretariat (or its location at Maryfield).

It is possible that Mrs. Thatcher will be aware of some specific initiatives being considered by unionists e.g. Archbishop Eames' speech on 19 May which mentioned the possibility of "a second agreement involving all the constitutional parties concerned in Northern Ireland" which has been coupled with approaches to Molyneaux, Paisley, Cushnahan and Hume by Archbishop Eames for a private meeting in Armagh in August. We understand that Mr. Hume, and presumably, the other leaders, have accepted the Archbishop's invitation. Mr. Hume reserves his judgement on the possibilities for success of this initiative.

Mrs. Thatcher, at meetings with the previous Taoiseach, was inclined to take the line that the SDLP had done extremely well out of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and that they were "dragging their feet" on engaging in talks. Mrs. Thatcher seemed, at one stage, to take the view that the SDLP should make a gesture to Unionists. If this point is raised, the Taoiseach could say that the SDLP has always been willing to engage in talks without preconditions and, indeed, Mr. Hume's acceptance of Archbishop Eames's invitation is proof of the SDLP's bona fides in this matter.

In regard to devolution, the Taoiseach could refer to his Dail reply to a question on this issue on 23 June 1987. The British Ambassador told the Secretary to the Government recently that the British were sensitive to the Taoiseach's views on devolution and would of course take them into account in any developments. Their intention, the Ambassador said, was to make progress only in consultation with Dublin.

The Agreement (Article 4) says that the Irish Government support the declared policy of the British Government of devolution in Northern Ireland. The Agreement provides that:

- devolution would be on a basis that would secure widespread acceptance throughout the community;
- a new North-South machinery would need to be established by the responsible authorities in the North and South to deal with devolved matters in the economic, social and cultural areas;
- the Agreement and the Conference would remain after devolution was achieved to deal with non-devolved matters affecting Northern Ireland and would resume its full activities if devolved Government failed.

The Irish Government has the right to put forward its views on the modalities of bringing about devolution in so far as they affect the interests of the nationalist community.

Devolution was referred to in the Queen's Speech in Parliament on 28 June 1987. The Queen's Speech said "In Northern Ireland my Government will seek an agreed basis on which greater responsibility can be devolved to representatives of the people". Devolution remains, therefore, the political objective of the Thatcher Government.

The Unionists reacted through the OUP's Deputy Leader, Harold McCusker (a member of the OUP/DUP joint "Task Force") who pointed to the absence of any reference to the Agreement in the Speech. He said that he "was keen" to have devolution, but then added that he would not participate in negotiations for devolution while the Anglo-Irish Agreement remained. He drew however a distinction between negotiations and discussions saying that "it is quite possible to have discussions to determine the attitudes of other parties to our problem without compromise". Sammy Wilson, Press Officer for the DUP reacted favourably to the Queen's speech and proposed low level talks at official level to find out what the Queen's speech was intended to signal to unionists and what the Government's agenda was (he did not insist on the suspension of the Agreement or the Secretariat as a precondition for such low level contacts) so as to work towards an alternative to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Other unionists had been critical of the Queen's speech. The Secretariat in Belfast has reported that the prevalent view among British officials is that Unionists are not yet ready to address the issue of devolution. Prime Minister Thatcher may, therefore, confine herself to raising the issue in a general way.

Cross-Border Security Co-operation

Mrs. Thatcher will emphasise the need for intensified cross-border security cooperation and probably refer specifically to:

- the exploitation by terrorists of the border and the vulnerability of the security forces in the North to attacks by IRA units based in the South (possibly with reference to the recent exchange of information about active terrorists between the Gardai and RUC); She may also note the increase in violence in Northern Ireland this year compared with 1986. Comparative figures for period 1 January - 25 June are 52 killings for this year compared to 29 last year. Of these figures 17 were

members of the security forces by comparison with 13 last year. On the other hand killings in the Northern Ireland border areas decreased i.e. 8 this year as against 13 last year (1 January - 25 June) of which 1 (UDR) was a member of the security forces by comparison with 7 for the period 1 January - 25 June last year. Note: We patrol the full length of the border on our side.

Furthermore, security costs directly attributable to the Northern situation are very heavy on our side. For example, in 1985 they came to £457 million or 26.8% of total security expenditure, Gardai, Army and Prison service. This is, per head of population, four times more than British expenditure on Northern Ireland security;

- the need for action on our side in regard to surveillance; Note: We have increased the number of Gardai exclusively engaged in surveillance by over 200%;

- better communication links and contact between the security forces. Note: This is under examination by a joint working party.

The Taoiseach could emphasise the strong commitment of the Government to continue and intensify cooperation between the police forces so as to defeat terrorism in the island of Ireland. He could refer to the action already taken to intensify such cooperation, action which the Government intends to maintain and build on in every area identified in that Article on cross-border security cooperation (Article 9) viz: threat assessments, exchange of information, liaison structures, technical cooperation, training of personnel and operational resources. (Note: A detailed list of steps undertaken arising out of the programme of work provided for in that Article has been included in the Justice brief).

The Taoiseach could also point to our worries about arms reaching loyalist paramilitaries and perhaps refer to the recent conviction in Britain of two British Army soldiers for stealing anti-tank rockets destined for the UDA. The Taoiseach may wish to enquire as to when action will be taken on the Stalker/Sampson Report - part three of which deals with RUC structures.

As regards British proposals for further cooperation, the Department of Justice has prepared briefing which will give views on the level of security cooperation and the practical results so far and cover British views on:

- Special Detective Units in the Border Areas;
- The British request for Assistant Commissioner to co-ordinate Border security;
- Garda intelligence-gathering;
- communications.

Clady Bridge

The RUC told the Gardai on 25 June that Clady Bridge would be reopened possibly within 24 hours and that the request for a field telephone link between the Gardai and the British Army Post has been withdrawn. The Secretariat was informed of the proviso that we should continue to maintain our two checkpoints in the area, one longstanding and one recent. It is understood that there are no intentions at present to remove the checkpoints on our side.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement

We want to operate the Agreement and its agenda through the Conference. We feel that the agenda in itself forms an ample programme for joint action by the Governments over the coming years. Until constructive political movement develops, it would be sensible to concentrate on making progress on the agenda of the Conference in all its aspects.

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Review Clause (Article 11): In case the Prime Minister raises the Review Clause, the Taoiseach will be aware that under this Clause the two Governments must review 'the working of the Conference..... to see whether any changes in the scope and nature of its activities are desirable' before November 1988 or earlier if either Government requests. A main reason for this review clause was to allow for changes in the working of the Conference if devolution was achieved before the three year period. If there is no progress on devolution there may be no reason for any such changes.

Next Meeting of the Conference: We hope this will take place early in July (possible dates are between 3 and 14 July). Progress in the Conference has been held up by the elections and referendum. At the next meeting, the Conference will discuss cross-border security cooperation, relations between the security forces in Northern Ireland and the nationalist community (including the need for a Code of Conduct for the RUC), cross border economic and social cooperation and fair employment legislation in Northern Ireland.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council: The Council (resulting from the 1980 Anglo-Irish Summit) is continuing its work at official level. The Heads of Government will wish to consider in the future a date for the fourth meeting of the Council at Summit level. The third meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council at Heads of Government level was held at Hillsborough on 15 November 1985.

Security and Legal Issues/Extradition Act 1987

The Taoiseach may wish to refer to security issues in Northern Ireland (need for progress in relations between the security forces and the community) and legal issues (public confidence in the administration of justice). Both issues were identified in Articles 7 and 8 of the Agreement.

The Taoiseach might say that there is a range of issues which need to be dealt with in these areas. He might stress that the immediate priorities are: (i) the introduction of a Code of Conduct for the RUC, (ii) accompaniment of the UDR and Army patrols by the RUC in their contact with civilians and (iii) reform of the court system in Northern Ireland. He might say that he has authorised the Minister for Foreign Affairs and officials to pursue these and other matters in the Conference. He might also refer to (i) the importance of impartial policing during the marching season now beginning, (ii) continued efforts to reduce harassment of nationalists by the security forces and (iii) his hope that it will be possible for the Home Secretary to refer the Guildford and Maguire cases to the Court of Appeal, as he has already done in the Birmingham Six case (which we appreciate).

There was in fact a parallel established in the Hillsborough Communique between early progress in the security and legal areas and our accession to the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism. The Extradition Act 1987 - intended to give effect to the European Convention - will come into operation on 1 December next unless a resolution to the contrary is passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas before that date. If the Taoiseach raises progress in the security and legal areas of concern to nationalists, the Prime Minister is likely to refer to the Convention and the Extradition Act 1987. She may raise extradition in any case in connection with security cooperation. The Taoiseach might refer to the serious reservations expressed by his party and by other opposition parties last December/January about the Extradition Act including the debate on the prima facie question and to the strong doubts which exist in the public mind about the fairness of the system of justice in the North (including the single judge Diplock court) as well as the damaging effects of the Birmingham Six and other cases in Britain on Irish public opinion. He may wish to say that the the Minister for Justice is currently examing the matter.

Note: The Government's consideration of the Act may be influenced by indications that the British side are prepared in the interim to make substantial parallel progress in the areas indicated in the Hillsborough Communique. The personal support of the Prime Minister would be necessary to ensure such progress.

Other Issues

Mrs. Thatcher might enquire about:

- (a) the relevance of the Supreme Court Judgement on the Single European Act to the Anglo-Irish Agreement; and
- (b) the proceedings which have been instituted by an OUP member, Mr. Christopher McGimpsey, in the High Court against the Government on the basis of compatibility between Article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution. The Prime Minister may express concern that the State may defend the case along the lines of the defence in the Boland case after Sunningdale.

As regards (a) the whole question of the effect of the Supreme Court Judgement on other international agreements is under examination by legal experts. As regards (b) a statement of claim has been lodged only very recently (earlier this month) by McGimpsey. The next step will be to clarify various aspects of the statement in order to enable the State to give consideration to its defence. It is unlikely that the case will come on until late this year and it may come on later.

Taoiseach's Meeting with the British Prime Minister,
Brussels, 29 June 1987

LEGAL AND SECURITY ISSUES

1. Article 8 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement provides that the Conference shall seek measures which would give substantial expression to the aim of public confidence in the administration of justice. The first meeting at official level on this matter since 28 November 1986 has been arranged for Dublin on 29 June.
2. The question arises, first, of the Government's priorities in this area. The following are the matters which could be regarded as priorities in order of importance:
 - (i) Mode of Trial for Scheduled Offences: The introduction of three-judge courts has been sought consistently by the leaders of both communities in the North as well as by human rights organisations (most recently the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights) and by the Irish Government. Although this proposal was rejected in October 1986, the door was not closed for the future. Nicholas Scott said recently that the arguments for and against change are finely balanced and that the question would be kept under review. There is a chance, although less than a 50/50 chance, that the British would agree to make this concession in order to help build a solid relationship with the new Government here. In this respect, the Government's reservations about the constitutionality and utility of the Agreement when in opposition will be an advantage. There is little doubt that the introduction of three-judge courts would have a very positive psychological effect on nationalists and on public confidence in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland.

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- (ii) Structure and Organisation of the Court System: Nationalists believe that control of the judicial system is vested entirely in the post of Lord Chief Justice, a post which has always been held by a unionist with the possible exception of the first incumbent who was Catholic. We have proposed the creation of a second senior judicial post (possibly President of the Crown Court) which could be held by a nationalist. Informal contacts have suggested that the British are prepared to consider this proposal.

A second and related problem is the overwhelmingly unionist composition of the judiciary. At present only three out of ten positions on the Appeal Court/High Court and one out of thirteen positions on the County Court are held by Catholics. This represents only four Catholic judges out of twenty-three who sit on the Diplock Bench. We have urged the desirability of greater nationalist representation on the bench. There is a vacancy on the Appeal Court following the murder of Lord Justice Gibson (the thinking in legal circles is that this vacancy will be filled by a Protestant) and a second vacancy may arise in the near future with the possible retirement of Lord Justice O'Donnell (a Catholic). Good appointments to the bench and to a second judicial office would have a very important influence on the court system and judicial sentencing and other practices. However, they would not have nearly so powerful an impact on the nationalist community as the introduction of three-judge courts.

- (iii) Aspects of Emergency Legislation: The instruments of legislation are the Emergency Provisions Act and the Prevention of Terrorist Act. Both Acts will be reviewed in March 1988 and we could seek to have various amendments incorporated at that stage, including

- the descheduling of offences to increase further the number of cases heard by jury;
- a reduction in the maximum period of detention from 7 to 5 days;
- strengthening of the rights of suspects in custody.

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(iv) Rights of Suspects in Custody: It is important that a statutory code of practice governing the treatment of suspects in custody be introduced in Northern Ireland at an early stage. (Such a code is also in force in Britain and the British have announced that corresponding provisions will be introduced in Northern Ireland). The issues here would include the provision of information to relatives, access to a solicitor and protection against ill-treatment.

(v) Identity Issues: We have drawn attention to a number of identity issues - symbols and traditions in the courts to which nationalists object - and have suggested changes relating to oaths and declarations and to court practice and procedure.

3. The Hillsborough Parallel

In the Hillsborough communique, the administration of justice was set in the same broad context as extradition. Paragraph 7 of the communique set the intention of the Irish Government to accede to the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism against the background of early progress in the areas of relations between the security forces and the community, the administration of justice and (to be noted) security cooperation. The remit of the two official groups which have been working on Article 8 reflects the 'parallelism' between the administration of justice and extradition.

4. Extradition Act 1987

In considering its choice of priorities, therefore, the Government will wish to give particular consideration to the parallel progress sought by the British on extradition. If the Government decided to amend the Extradition Act 1987 in a substantial way, for example, to introduce a requirement of prima facie evidence, or if the Government decided to defer commencement of the Act, there would be no prospect of significant progress in this area. On the other hand, if the Government decided to give favourable consideration to commencing the Act on 1 December, they would wish to have evidence to show that they had succeeded in making progress on the administration of justice in the North. In that event

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this point could and should be made forcefully to the British side. It should be noted that most of the reforms proposed, including the major changes of three-judge courts and a second judicial office, require amendment to existing Westminster Acts and could not be brought in by 1 December. They could however be announced as definite commitments before that date.

Relations between the Security Forces and the Community

5. Other goals in the area of relations between the security forces and the community may be easier to achieve, i.e., the Code of Conduct for the RUC which should be introduced shortly, announcement of an increase in accompaniment of the UDR by the RUC and announcement of a programme of special measures. The behaviour of the security forces is of greatest importance for the longer term because it makes the widest and most constant impact on nationalists.

Cases in Britain

6. Consideration of the Extradition Act involves two other factors. The first concerns other issues which will or may affect the public's view of commencing the Extradition Act. The obvious issue here is the Birmingham Six and other cases in Britain. None of these will be resolved by 1 December. The only progress which could be made would be the referral by the British Home Secretary of the Guildford Four and Maguire cases to the Court of Appeal in Britain. (Fianna Fáil senators have put down a motion on the Seanad Order Paper linking the commencement of the Act to such a decision.) If the Government believe such action by the Home Secretary is essential to favourable consideration of the Extradition Act, it would be necessary to impress this on the British as soon as possible at Ministerial level.

Extradition Safeguards

7. Lastly, the Government will wish to consider the issue of sufficiency of evidence and other substantive issues involved in the Extradition Act. These are matters in the first instance for the Minister for Justice. If the Government intend to give consideration to commencing the Act on 1

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December, it would be desirable to authorise further discussions at official level in order to explore what non-statutory arrangements may be made with the British side on evidence and other questions in order to allay any public anxiety that the commencement of the Act will seriously infringe the rights of Irish citizens.

Summary

8. In summary, there is a mix of inter-related matters which the Government will wish to consider:
- (i) priority reforms in the administration of justice;
 - (ii) priority measures in relations between the security forces and the community;
 - (iii) referral of the Guildford Four and Maguire cases to the Court of Appeal and possible outcome (uncertain) of the Birmingham Six case;
 - (iv) the question of amendment or deferment of the Extradition Act and the question of exploring further with the British side what non-statutory measures could be agreed to allay public anxiety about commencing the Act.

Positive decisions taken in any of the first three of these areas will create stronger expectations in the British mind in relation to the Extradition Act.

Anglo-Irish Section,
June, 1987.

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POLITICAL INITIATIVES INVOLVING UNIONISTS, 1986-1987

A sequence of initiatives aimed at getting talks involving Unionists underway occurred during 1986. The first phase, from February to April, the most important as it included contact with the British Government, included;

- Downing Street Talks, 25 February, 1986
- Archbishop Eame's initiative and subsequent activities, April - May 1986, ending with the dissolution of the NI Assembly.

The second phase involved initiatives by various individuals or groups - the Charter Group (September 1986), Catherwood (October 1986) and O'Leary/Hadden (late October 1986) - and did not elicit any substantive political response.

The initiatives were designed to engage Unionists in dialogue at a time when they had begun a boycott of Westminster, refused to meet with NIO Ministers, and had laid out their pre-talks condition that the Agreement be abrogated and the Secretariat and Maryfield closed. Unionist insistence on the latter two points stymied the initiatives before any real progress was made.

Downing Street talks

Molyneaux and Paisley met PM Thatcher on 25 February 1986, in what proved to be a fruitful encounter. While reaffirming the British Government's commitment "to the implementation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement", the Prime Minister

- "made it clear that the Government would like to establish new arrangements for enabling Unionists to make their views known to the Government on affairs in Northern Ireland"
- welcomed "discussion with the Unionist leaders on the form that such arrangements might take"

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- "offered consultations with the Unionist leaders about the future of the Northern Ireland Assembly"
- offered consultations "about the arrangements for handling Northern Ireland business in Parliament at Westminster"
- "agreed to consider positively a suggestion by Mr. Molyneux and Dr. Paisley that the Government should call a round table conference to discuss devolution in Northern Ireland".

During the meeting Paisley had insisted that by entering talks on devolution they would not be accepting the Agreement - the talks would not be within the parameters or "ambit" of the Agreement. PM Thatcher reminded both Unionist leaders that, under the Agreement, the Irish Government had a right to put forward views and proposals on devolution but that this did not mean that the Irish Government would be part of the round table conference. She stressed the fact that the Agreement provided that any matters devolved to a NI administration would no longer fall for discussion in the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

As for the "suspension" of the Agreement, PM Thatcher said, when pressed, that she would "operate the (Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental) Conference sensitively".

Neither Molyneux nor Paisley were able to carry the initiative any further. On their return to Belfast, the executive committees of their respective parties passed resolutions reaffirming their repudiation of the Agreement, calling upon the British Government to abandon or suspend the Anglo-Irish Agreement pending discussions of their proposals and stating that neither party would enter into negotiations about structures of Government for Northern Ireland within the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

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The respective positions of Prime Minister Thatcher and the Unionist leadership were repeated in further correspondence in March and April. In a joint statement of 16 April, the DUP/OUP leaders stated that it would be essential that, during the period of negotiations aimed at finding "an alternative to and a replacement of the Anglo-Irish Agreement", the Agreement "would not be implemented".

Meanwhile, Mr. Ken Bloomfield, head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service and Dr. George Quigley, Secretary to the Department of Finance and Personnel met Messrs Donlon, O Tuathail and Nally on 9 April in Dublin. Bloomfield and Quigley argued that the Anglo-Irish Agreement had effected a breaking of the mould in Northern Ireland and that the opportunity for talks ought to be encouraged.

The Irish side replied that, for its part, "there was no commitment, at present, to anything other than implementation of the Agreement "sensitively". Bloomfield and Quigley suggested that there could be, at some point, an argument "for not suspending or changing the Agreement but for a supplementary agreement to deal with questions arising from the devolution discussions (that could be underway)". Bloomfield said, further, that to get dialogue going "it would be desirable to defer meetings of the Conference, to leave room for the dialogue, or give priority to the dialogue, or hold the Conference somewhere else than in Northern Ireland".

Molyneaux's approach through Eames

In response to a request on 5 April, 1986 by Molyneaux, through Archbishop Eames, the then Taoiseach made the following points:-

- it would be imprudent to embark on any process at this stage unless both the Irish and British Governments were convinced that the Unionist leadership involved could actually deliver;

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- both Governments would need to be satisfied that any opening given at this stage would not be such as to offer encouragement to hardliners to continue to pursue their tactics;
- in view of the grave dangers involved in any discussions at this stage failing - the initiative would then be given back to the men of violence just before the marching season - it was vital that the outcome of any discussions should be effectively predetermined;
- in this connection the Taoiseach believed that it was necessary as a minimum to know that Unionists would be prepared in a devolved Government situation to share executive power with the SDLP, not necessarily in a cabinet style structure;
- if all the above conditions could be met, the Taoiseach thought it should be possible to give priority to talks on devolution vis-a-vis the Conference for a period of up to two months. Under no circumstances, however, could the Agreement be suspended or tampered with. In reply to a query from his contact, the Taoiseach went on to indicate that the Secretariat at Maryfield was also not to be tampered with.

Molyneaux's initial response was reported to have been positive but the matter fell through.

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Catherwood, Charter Groups, O'Leary/Hadden Initiatives

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

These initiatives contained proposals, often vague, on various forms of devolution and on how talks could be commenced. They resulted in much media noise and little political movement. The Catherwood initiative did provoke statements from the Irish and British Governments, (appended with a note of the initiative itself).

Archbishop Eames' May-June Initiative

In tandem with Archbishop Eames' speech on the need to supercede the present Agreement, Eames issued a private invitation to the four party leaders in Northern Ireland to hold talks under his auspices in mid-August. It is believed that all four have accepted. In this eventuality, and given the imminence of the marching season, there is little likelihood of a substantive political initiative before the Autumn.

June 1987

All good wishes

Yours sincerely

+ Noel Chenevix

ARCHBISHOP OF ARRAGH

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