

E.R.

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MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND
MR. O'KENNEDY

STEERING BRIEF

The Main Objective

1. Our aim should be to defuse with as little fuss as possible the issue of Ministerial meetings with the Irish. This meeting should be treated as one in the occasional series of exchanges between two friendly Governments - a meeting which would have taken place a month ago but for the death of the ex-President.

2. In pursuance of this there should be no formal agenda of specific matters for discussion - apart, perhaps from agreement on the UK/Irish economic report, there is no "business" to be done - although the talks will naturally range over the three main headings; politics, security and the economy. The presence of Mr. Judd should demonstrate that the meeting is an Anglo-Irish one, not North/South. He will take the lead in dealing with the work of the Steering Group on Anglo-Irish Economic Co-operation, and on the few bilateral Anglo-Irish matters which may come up.

3. Our relationship with the Irish is not the same under all headings, and it may be helpful to seek to draw a distinction in the treatment of the three subjects.

i. On Politics: our position is that we are prepared to tell an interested Government how we see the situation.

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ii. On Security: we would stress that both Governments need to work closely as allies in the fight against the common enemy;

iii. On the Economy: we take the view that there may be scope for practical co-operation across the Irish Sea as well as for co-operation on practical cross-border projects of mutual benefit.

Subordinate Objectives

4. Our subordinate objectives on these three subjects should be:-

(a) Politics: To focus attention on the immediate Northern Ireland situation and prospects, and to avoid arousing afresh the question of a declaration of interest in Irish unity; and on the latter merely to note the "agreement to differ" arrived at in Copenhagen. To make clear that political progress can in our view only be made by a move to devolved government, and that the published framework put forward as a basis for discussion provides the way forward; - to seek their reaffirmation of their general support for this course on the basis of the line taken by the Taoiseach in the Dail on 17th April when he reported on the Copenhagen meeting. In the meantime we shall continue to meet our responsibilities through effective direct rule.

(b) Security: To emphasise to the Irish that we have not sought to criticise their security activities; on the

contrary we much appreciate the efforts leading to successes such as the arrests and finds made recently in Donegal. (Nevertheless, nothing must be said which could be quoted as implying complete satisfaction with the present Irish security effort). Our concern is that they should understand that the role played by the border is a complex matter, not capable of encapsulation in particular percentages; and that the security forces on both sides of the border should know that now is not the time to relax efforts. Indeed we want a continuance of the helpful exchange of information privately, with even closer co-operation through police channels.

(c) The Economy: To have the report of the Anglo/Irish official talks received by Ministers on UK/Irish basis; [to agree to publish it]; and to announce the Lough Erne study as a particular practical cross-border project.

Irish Objectives

5. It seems unlikely that the Irish Government will want to risk detracting from the image of the Copenhagen meeting as having got relations "back on the rails". On the other hand, they will no doubt wish to claim what credit they can from the meeting. Indeed, given their tendency to overreact, they may wish to have it appear as a victory, being set up on "their terms", with no police present and no special emphasis on security. They are also likely to seek to play down, or wholly suppress the UK/Irish context in which we would wish to set the whole topic of economic co-operation.

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6. Thus, while the Irish Government may in general play this meeting quietly, their background briefing may be calculated to demonstrate that they have dealt firmly with the British position on such matters as security co-operation, extradition, and "creeping integration". This suggests the need for carefully chosen language in dealing with such topics; and for an agreed communique and a joint press conference at the end.

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2. Our relationship with the Irish is not the same under all headings, and it may be helpful to seek to draw a distinction in the treatment of the three subjects.

3. On Foreign Affairs we are prepared to tell the Irish the situation.

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