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of the
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Secretary
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H. H. H.

Department of Foreign Affairs

Frank

Seamst Valley & Valley
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The North / South element
is of particular interest.
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Confidential

Meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Brian
Lenihan T.D. and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland,
Mr. Humphrey Atkins, on 13 October 1980 in London

The participants at the meeting on the British side were
as follows:

Secretary of State

Sir Kenneth Stowe

Mr. Michael Moriarty, NIO

Mr. Michael Newington, FCO

Mr. Paul Buxton, NIO

Miss Joan Kelley, NIO

Mr. David Gilliland, Press Office, NIO, Belfast

Mr. Brian Palmer, Central Secretariat, Belfast

Mr. Roy Harrington, Private Secretary to the
Secretary of State

Mr. Leonard Figg, British Ambassador to Ireland

The participants on the Irish side were:

Minister

Secretary

Ambassador, London

Mr. D.M. Neligan, Assistant Secretary, Anglo-Irish
Division

Mr. P. Dempsey, Minister Plenipotentiary, London Embassy

Mr. H. Swift, Counsellor, London Embassy

Mr. S. Whelan, Counsellor, Anglo-Irish Division

Mr. M. Burke, Counsellor, Anglo-Irish Division

Mr. Atkins welcomed the Minister and his delegation to London. He said that there was a considerable number of matters of common interest and concern to be discussed between them. Particular attention should be paid to the fact that the two Prime Ministers would be meeting in the near future and both sides should today prepare the ground to some extent for that meeting. Mr. Atkins suggested that the traditional form of agenda for these Ministerial-level meetings should be followed: political, security and economic questions.

A. POLITICAL QUESTIONS

The Minister began by thanking Mr. Atkins for his words of welcome. For the Irish side, the main purpose of today's meeting should be to prepare for the Prime Ministerial meeting. Both sides should also consider the degree of progress made since the last Ministerial-level meeting in April. The Minister stressed the importance of the Northern Ireland political dimension of the agenda for today's meeting. In particular, both sides should concentrate upon (a) relations between the Irish and British Governments and (b) relations between the communities in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins said that the Irish Government, insofar as Northern Ireland was concerned, was a closely interested party, more interested than any other party outside of those immediately involved with the search for a solution. He felt it would be useful at this point to bring the Minister up to date on developments on the British side of late. In his dealings with the Northern Ireland parties, Mr. Atkins said that it was a basic working rule that confidences would be respected all round. He would not therefore go into any detail on his discussions with the parties. But he could say that, whatever one might read in the newspapers, the parties had not said to him that he should cease looking for ways forward. There were two points he would make: (a) there was no question of his changing course and (b) there was no precise deadline set to his efforts. To change course suddenly would, in his opinion, be disastrous. The British Government was committed to the principle of devolved government for Northern Ireland. To move from that position would open the door to the integrationists.

He did not believe that the Irish Government would welcome this possibility. An obviously important date for the British Government was the Queen's Speech in November and references to Northern Ireland therein would of course have to involve consultation with his British Cabinet colleagues. His own view however was that the Queen's Speech would not be specific on the question of legislation for devolved government. A further point he wished to make was that with regard to the Irish dimension, there were 'real difficulties which were perfectly obvious'. Unionist representatives had told him that the Irish Government should have no involvement in the search for solutions in Northern Ireland. At the same time, British Government policy was based on two unchangeable principles: (a) any arrangements for the future administration of Northern Ireland would have to involve the minority community, and (b) such arrangements would have to be acceptable to both communities. The British Government was 'absolutely rock-solid on this'.

The Minister said that he welcomed what the Secretary of State had to say about the need for communal agreement to future arrangements in the North, particularly as regards the minority community. However, it would be wrong to divorce the two Northern Ireland communities from the rest of Ireland. What the British Government should consider were the possibilities for parallel undertakings. In other words, there was a necessity for intergovernmental consultations to be held and at the same time appropriate contacts with the Northern Ireland parties. It would be difficult for the minority community in present circumstances to accept any purely internal Northern Ireland solution without the wider involvement of the Irish Government. The Minister said that the Taoiseach would wish to pursue this matter at the Heads of Government meeting later this year. The Irish Government was committed to securing peace within Northern Ireland and to the notion of closer inter-governmental cooperation between Dublin and London. The Minister asked whether there would be anything in the Queen's Speech which might exclude the kind of proposal which he was now putting forward.

Mr. Atkins asked whether what the Irish side was proposing was quadripartite or a parallel conference.

The Minister replied that what we were seeking was an inter-governmental conference perhaps at two levels, running in parallel with appropriate contacts with the two communities in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins said there would not be any surprises in the Queen's Speech. The British Government would be 'staying on course'. While he would not care to predict right now what would be in the Queen's Speech, he could say that it would not exclude the kind of proposal which the Minister had just put forward. Mr. Atkins added that one of the major problems faced by the British was to get the parties in Northern Ireland to engage in talks with London. The Irish Government could help in this respect, by trying to convince the Unionists that the unique relationship was in fact a good thing. The British Government could not do this, but the Irish Government could.

The Minister said he would note what Mr. Atkins had said about the Queen's Speech. In regard to the Irish proposal for an inter-governmental conference, he suggested that today's meeting might not go into further detail or examination of it. Perhaps the best course would be for each side to report to its Head of Government and for the Summit meeting to consider the proposal in detail.

Mr. Atkins said that he agreed with this course. He would be reporting to his Cabinet colleagues on the views exchanged today. He noted that the Irish side would be bringing forward the conference proposal at the Summit.

B. SECURITY QUESTIONS

1. Cross-border security cooperation

Mr. Atkins introduced this item by suggesting that discussions be kept strictly confidential. He said that the efforts of the Irish Government in this area were very much appreciated by London. He said it had not gone unnoticed that the Irish Government was devoting more and more of its resources to border security. The British Government was well aware of what the Irish Government was doing, through the close working relationship that existed between the RUC

and the Garda Siochana. However, Mr. Atkins said that one aspect of the situation was causing him some concern. He indicated that the terrorist problem in the North was now lower than it had been, but there was the feeling that a problem still existed in the areas straddling the border. The impression he had from talking to people in Northern Ireland was that it was too easy to go back and forth across the border. Twice recently, in his contacts with 'ordinary people', he was left in no doubt that 'things were boiling up beneath the surface'. He had been told of the possibility that 'a whole lot of Protestants would murder a whole lot of Catholics'. The last thing he would want to see was any form of violence of this kind.

The Minister replied that he was aware as well that such sentiments had been expressed in the Protestant community. On border security, the Garda Siochana kept in close touch with developments. They had made significant arms finds recently. The Minister said that the type of serious crime now being committed in border areas was an extremely difficult one to arrest. The border terrain itself was difficult, as the British appreciated, and there was a considerable degree of sectarianism frequently involved in such crimes.

2. Behaviour of the security forces in N.I.

Turning to the question of the behaviour of the security forces in N.I., the Minister said that account had to be taken of the fears among the minority community that elements such as the UVF were apparently able to infiltrate the back-up security forces, particularly the UDR but he welcomed the firm action taken against such elements. In the circumstances the Secretary of State should take into account the genuine apprehension and fears of the minority in relation to the UDR. The Minister said he was pleased to record that relations between the RUC and the Garda Siochana had never been better.

Mr. Atkins said that the RUC Chief Constable was cracking down on all types of crime. The Chief Constable would continue to prosecute any 'UVF-types' that might have infiltrated into the security forces. The active fight against crime by the Garda Siochana in border areas had made the Chief Constable's task in that respect that much easier.

British policy was to involve the RUC more and more, with a consequent diminution of British Army role.

3. Question of H-Blocks hunger strike

The Minister said he would now like to turn to the reports of a hunger strike due to start in the H-Blocks in Long Kesh. The Minister recalled that he had briefed Ambassador Figg on this question in Dublin on 10 October. The Irish Government was very concerned at these reports and were approaching the question from a humanitarian viewpoint. There was the real danger that a hunger strike could have serious consequences in terms of public opinion. There was too the possibility that the hunger strike might spread to involve Irish prisoners in British jails. The Minister expressed the hope that the British authorities would continue to strive for a solution to this problem. He pointed out the risks attendant upon attracting unfavourable propaganda if the planned strike went ahead.

Mr. Atkins said that on the basis of the information available to him, there was a chance that at least some of the prisoners in the Maze Prison would embark on a hunger strike. In that eventuality, the British Government would say publicly that 'there can never be a question of crimes being committed for political purposes'.

(Mr. Atkins believed that the British attitude would in fact mirror some of the language used by the Pope during his 1979 visit to Ireland). Mr. Atkins said that political status for the prisoners was out of the question. The British Government took into account the decision of the European Commission on Human Rights which had rejected the claim submitted by four of the prisoners. On the humanitarian aspects of a hunger strike, the British Government would say that 'it is the responsibility of Governments to treat prisoners humanely and decently'. He said that a number of important changes had been introduced already to improve the conditions of prisoners in the H-Blocks. These included: extra visits, more private letters, exercise facilities, association with other prisoners, better access to reading material, and the non-searching of visitors in the case of visits where no physical contact was involved. Despite the 'animal behaviour of some prisoners', the British Government had proceeded to introduce these improvements in the system. But the British

Government could never accept the idea that there were different categories of murder. The PIRA would undoubtedly try to gain public support wherever they could and the British would put up with that. For the moment, Mr. Atkins said, 'we shall have to see how matters proceed'.

The Minister repeated the concern of the Irish Government about the proposed hunger strike. He again drew attention to the propaganda aspects of a strike which he said could gain world-wide attention. The British Government should consider, from the humanitarian point of view, whether there were means available to them to remedy this situation before serious deterioration took place.

Mr. Atkins said that the reforms he had just mentioned had not been publicised. The only 'alteration' that had been taken up by the prisoners was that of extra visits. He added that he had no information on whether British jails would become involved in a hunger strike.

Sir Kenneth Stowe intervened to say that the hunger strike might be accompanied by a resumption of PIRA violence on the British mainland. This was one of the possibilities that the British had to bear in mind.

Mr. Atkins said that in the event of a hunger strike, there would be no question of force-feeding the strikers. If the prisoners chose to starve themselves to death, that was a matter for them.

5. Crossmaglen GAA Grounds

The Minister raised the situation at Crossmaglen GAA grounds. He expressed concern at the prospect of the works at the base continuing for another two years and he urged the British to reconsider their policy in regard to the use of the entrance by British security forces personnel. The Minister stressed that the GAA was not only the largest sporting organisation in Ireland but that it played a major role in social affairs and exerted considerable influence in

Irish society. This aspect had to be taken into account when considering what the GAA wanted in relation to the Crossmaglen grounds.

Mr. Atkins said that the real problem was the opposition of the GAA to the existence of the British Army base in Crossmaglen. The GAA had told him that there was no need for the base. He could not accept this. It was evident that the security situation in Crossmaglen was serious: shootings, bombings and other crimes continued in that area. If the security problem did not exist, there would be no problem about the use of the GAA grounds. The GAA might consider withdrawal of the ban on security forces personnel which was a hindrance all round. However, Mr. Atkins said, there had been progress since part of the grounds were requisitioned in 1974. The greater part of the requisitioned area had now been restored to the GAA.

The Minister asked again what the position was in relation to the use of the entrance area.

Mr. Atkins replied that there would only be 'minimum use of the right of way' into the base. He looked forward to the day when the British Army would be withdrawn from Crossmaglen. The GAA would then have the whole of the requisitioned area returned to them. But that was out of the question at this stage. The circumstances in Crossmaglen were 'exceptional' but he still hoped for some improvement. That being said, Mr. Atkins remarked that he noted our continuing concern about this issue. The points made by the Minister would be taken into account.

C. NORTH-SOUTH ECONOMIC COOPERATION

1. Non-Quota Section Proposals:

The Minister referred to the agreement reached in Brussels last week on the NQS proposals. He urged that the funds allocated should be put to speedy use. There were high expectations on both sides of the border about these funds. There should be close consultation about funding of projects and an effective public relations exercise undertaken at the right time to draw attention to the value of this form of cross-border cooperation. Both sides should watch out for any attempts by their respective Exchequers to absorb the NQS funds into general revenue. These funds were explicitly earmarked for border area projects and could not be deployed for any other purpose. Another risk would be stalling by Exchequers on releasing the matching funds for use with the NQS funds.

Mr. Palmer of the NIO intervened to say that the NIO was building up a list of projects. The list was well advanced. Close liaison with Irish officials would be maintained.

Mr. Burke intervened to say that the Irish Government would shortly submit to the Commission an outline of the type of projects to be funded. The Irish side would for its part maintain close contact with the NIO on the question of detailed proposals.

The Minister emphasised the importance of moving forward with this work, which he said held out considerable promise for people on both sides of the border.

Mr. Atkins said that the views exchanged would be noted, including the fact that close cooperation at official level would continue to secure the best use of these NQS funds.

2. All-Ireland Energy Study

The Minister noted that a proposal for an All-Ireland energy study had been made and that consultations were taking place at official level with a view to carrying out the study.

Interconnection

The Minister raised the question of interconnection North/South and East/West. He also referred to the possibility of gas being piped to Belfast and said that a feasibility study was being carried out on this question. On the North/South electricity interconnector, Mr. Atkins said that on the advice of his security advisers attempts to restore the link 'would be given a pause'. Further examination of the prospects of restoring the link should be undertaken and on the basis of reports from officials both Prime Ministers should consider how to move forward. In relation to the East/West interconnector proposal, the Secretary of State said that this was to be considered by the Interconnector Working Party. A date had not yet been settled for a meeting. The Minister stressed that we were anxious to have a meeting as soon as possible to explore the possibility of such a link. The Secretary of State noted that the Tanaiste had asked for a meeting with Mr. Howell and he felt that the East/West proposal and other energy issues could be best dealt with by them. Miss Kelley thought that Mr. Colley should meet Mr. Shaw as well as Mr. Howell before the Summit to discuss the various energy proposals. The Secretary of State felt that while these issues should be "looked at" for the two Prime Ministers, it would not be possible to make much progress in the next six weeks.

4. Derry-Dublin Airlink:

Mr. Atkins said that the prospects for the airlink were not good. No private operator had been found who was prepared to operate a service which went beyond the limited taxi service that already existed, unless the operator were given a government subsidy. The problem was that there were no funds available at present which could be used to subsidise a private operator.

The Minister said that the area in question was relatively isolated and remote. Both Governments should seriously examine the possibilities open to them to establish the airlink. It was important to improve communications in that area and the airlink held out the real promise of such an improvement.

Mr. Atkins repeated that the funds were simply not available at present. He remarked that the Foyle Bridge was costing £15.5 millions. If the cost of the bridge were not so great, there might be some funds available for the airlink but that was not regrettably the case.

The Minister noted the British position on the airlink. He requested that the airlink proposal not be excluded for the future.

Mr. Atkins said that he would note the Irish interest in the question. He mentioned that he would be informing John Hume and the Derry City Council of the position.

5. Carlingford Lough:

Mr. Atkins raised the question of Carlingford Lough and said that the British were considering the possibility of legislation, which they would prefer not to introduce. Another possibility was to have Irish representatives on the CLC (ad hoc reorganisation) and he understood that the Irish Attorney-General was looking at this aspect. Mr. Burke confirmed that the possibility of ad hoc reorganisation under the terms of the 1864 Act was being considered by the Attorney-General. The Department of Transport was also considering the possibility of a compromise deal being discussed with Mr. O'Rahilly. This would involve Mr. O'Rahilly paying a proportion of the dues as he used only 9 of the buoys in the Lough. This possible compromise had been discussed with the Belfast authorities who were agreeable to it being put to Mr. O'Rahilly. We would be in contact with the Central Secretariat as soon as there were further developments. The Minister said that he would raise the matter with the Attorney-General.

6. Fisheries - Lough Foyle

Mr. Atkins said that his colleague Mr. Giles Shaw would be raising with Minister Power the whole question of the Foyle Fisheries Commission, which was 'very ropey and was falling apart'. There was a problem with the high level of poaching.

The Minister said that he would mention this to Minister Power.

7. Preparations for Summit and Energy (general)

Minister
The/ raised the question of preparations for the next Summit and suggested that the two Prime Ministers could decide questions such as the regularity and character of such meetings, the question of any new forms of cooperation and the possibility of more frequent meetings of British and Irish Ministers. He also suggested more frequent and regular Anglo-Irish inter-parliamentary exchanges. The Secretary of State agreed with the Minister's remarks and asked Ambassador Figg whether he wished to comment. The Ambassador raised the energy issue and wondered how this could be dealt with by the Prime Ministers. The Secretary of State said that decisions were not required at this stage. The energy aspect was important and perhaps the best way to proceed would be an assessment for the Prime Ministers of how far we have progressed on the various projects and where we expect to go in this area in the future. The Minister felt that it was important to bring energy into it.

Miss Joan Kelley of the NIO suggested that what was required for the Summit was a 'joint factual statement' of the overall position. There were many aspects of the energy question which took years to mature. A great deal of desk work by officials was called for before any firm proposals could emerge. In particular, she felt that the assumptions on which both sides were proceeding were not yet agreed jointly. This area of work would inevitably take time and the most that could be hoped for by the time of the Summit was the joint statement of the kind she was proposing. It was agreed by both Ministers that this should be done.

In relation to the gas proposal Miss Kelley thought that this could best be discussed by Mr. Shaw and the Tánaiste. The Secretary, Mr. O'Rourke, made the point that we were anxious that the infrastructure for the Northern Ireland gas industry should not be run down before the feasibility study had been completed by our Department of Energy.

The Secretary of State said it would be useful for the Prime Ministers to give their personal impetus to these developments. The Minister agreed that the Prime Ministers should look at it.