



## An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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*Secretary to the Govt - In case you have not seen*  
*10.10.89*  
Corrymeela Conference, Ballycastle, 6-8 October, 1989

*1. 10.10.89*  
1. Security Report, Michael McAtamney, Deputy Chief Constable RUC

He said the RUC was the second largest police force in the UK, and NI was one of the most intensively policed areas. The downward trend in violence had reasserted itself, and apart from Deal the 20th anniversary of 1969 had singularly failed to produce an upsurge in violence. The IRA lacked trained, motivated men, and while they had sufficient support for the current campaign, they were not able to sustain any long-term escalation of violence. But for Libyan arms supplies in 1985-6 the RUC would now be in a strong position. But the PIRA had material for several years. The Loyalists also had modern weapons, but not in the same quantity. The depletion of these stocks by search and capture would take time. There was no simple police or military solution, and it was difficult to envisage a situation in which terrorism could not continue at some level. For that reason political progress was essential.

2. Political Discussion

Kevin Boyle expressed the view that it must be accepted that the two communities are separate but equal, but that they should be allowed to decide for themselves how far they wish to integrate, without others forcing the pace. He sees the development of regional autonomy within the EC as providing a helpful framework, and went so far as to suggest possible regionalisation of government and police on the Belgian model.

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Sean Farren said the SDLP did not wish to see the present situation continue indefinitely, with a lack of input into Government, but he favoured seeking agreement on principles rather than coming forward with any detailed blueprint for structures at this stage.

John Alderdice thought the Europe of the regions provided the best chance for NI. He felt the British Government should put forward definite proposals within a legislative framework, which would provoke consultations and discussions and provide a semi-permanent solution. He also said Unionism was not about the union, but about protecting the identity of a community of people in the North-East of Ireland. He is still keen on a further meeting with the Taoiseach.

Raymond Ferguson began with a disclaimer that he did not speak for the OUP, and did not even know exactly what OUP policy was. He was concerned about the expanding input of the Irish Government under the Agreement, and the role of the Republic must in future be formalised, confined and defined. He spent much of his time lamenting the undeserved poor reputation of Stormont before 1968, leading to the belief that Unionists were not to be entrusted with power again. He was against opening up a discussion on Articles 2&3, which could have dangerous repercussions. Ferguson said Unionists did not want to provoke a confrontation with London. He agreed with Alderdice that the survival of identity factor was more important than the union. On dialogue with Dublin he felt a lot of low-level preparatory work was necessary, before leaders met.

Seamus Lynch of the Workers Party said that they favoured a democratic, socialist unitary State in Ireland within a united Western Europe. He was very positive about 1992, but like others complained NI was not getting its fair share of Structural Funds. The Anglo-Irish Agreement had not achieved its objectives. How much longer would people be prepared to accept it?

Sammy Wilson(DUP) said Unionists accepted a responsibility for improving relationships within the island. But the foot in the door of the Irish Government, while Unionists were excluded, could not be accepted. 'It is very cold, when one is locked outside the door'. No British Minister was competent to represent Unionist opinion. He warned that every political party needed to retain its credibility, if it was to make any deal hold. He complained of the sectarian triumphalism of the SDLP, and claimed UDR lives were being put at risk by the current controversy. He favoured a mechanism to deal with common problems for both North and South, and said that dialogue could address the impact of 1992. The needs of GB were not the same as those of NI, and for example agriculture, food production, were not well handled by the UK and were a fit matter for North-South discussion. He favoured both a regular structure for North-South cooperation (meeting monthly) as well as ad hoc consultations. This was on the assumption that it would be on the basis of 'two sovereign Governments'(sic) North and South meeting as equals.

Lord Hylton(independent peer with an interest in Ireland) said there was very great apathy in Britain over NI, unless stirred up by some atrocity, and only a very small minority followed Irish affairs closely. He was for the Anglo-Irish Agreement, but argued its ambiguities should be removed (and the present constitutional status made semi-permanent for at least 40 years). I pointed out the contradictions in this, and that one could not argue at the same time that the nationalist aspiration is legitimate but partition should be made permanent.

Paddy Harte claimed Garret FitzGerald had been asked by him at a party meeting on the eve of the Agreement about whether both communities supported it, and that he had been told that soundings had been taken, and 'We are hopeful that they will'.

Jim Tunney said he was very encouraged by Sammy Wilson's remarks and expressed the hope that Unionists might consider participating in the New Parliamentary Body.

A number of participants, such as Barry White, Peter McLachlan, Robin Wilson(editor of Fortnight), John Simpson the economist expressed frustration at the powerlessness of both communities, and it is clear that much of the middle class Protestant intelligentsia are still working tirelessly for devolution. McLachlan said he was meeting Eberhard of Duisburg shortly to get talks restarted. He blamed media cynicism for the previous debacle.

Apart from the above speakers I met and talked socially with Harry West, who reminisced about the past, and a number of Unionists councillors, Sir E. Archdale (Ards Council, Unionist Executive) and Jim Simpson(Ballymoney Council), both of whom were cordial and friendly. Archdale, an eccentric retired Admiral, who was able to quote Marx, and who had an ancestor in the pre-1800 Parliament who refused a peerage and voted against the Union, told me he thought the Act of Union the greatest disaster in Irish history, and but for that Ireland would be a united, self-governing member of the commonwealth under the Crown! I said to Sammy Wilson that if he wanted letters stamped with the battle of the Boyne in 1990 he would have to post them south of the border.

### 3. Northern Ireland and 1992

While Dennis Kennedy made the official case for the benefits of 1992, though conceding NI's share of the Structural Funds was less than a fifth of the rest of Ireland's, John Simpson in a brutally frank speech claimed that 1992 in the present mess could be disastrous for NI.

They had lost 30,000 industrial jobs, £2 billion in investment as a result of the troubles, and no Government in London could offset the effects of all this. What firm would want to settle in NI? It was all very well talking of a level playing pitch, but their patch was under several feet of water, and few would go near it. He was making the case for the imperative need for a political settlement.

I made some points about Southern perspectives on 1992, and mentioned the scope for joint projects of Community interest in the £2 billion ecus still to be distributed, and that such joint projects might help make up the perceived shortfall in NI's receipts. In response to the criticism that the Irish Government only ever took up the Nationalist cause instead of relating to all the people of Northern Ireland, which was made up by a number of those present, I made the point that while the Agreement as drafted only gave the Irish Government locus standi in relation to the Nationalist community, the whole area of economic cooperation and the effects of 1992, which we had highlighted in the review, and which we were keen to pursue, clearly related to all the people of Northern Ireland and not one particular community.

**Attendance:** Jim Tunney and myself represented Fianna Fáil. Paddy Harte and Nora Owen were present for Fine Gael, but there was no other representation from the South.

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9th October, 1989.