

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2011/127/1017
Creation Date(s):	5 December 1981
Extent and medium:	9 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.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR REFERENCE TO ITS CONTENT BEFORE TIME OF DELIVERY

Speech by the Rt. Hon. J. Enoch Powell, M.P., to the Annual General Meeting of the Coleraine Divisional Unionist Association, at the Borough Council Offices, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, at 9 pm Saturday, 5th December 1981

Sometimes a small good comes out of a great evil. The meeting of the Prime Minister on 6th November with the Irish Premier was a great evil, and the carnage of the last month resulted from it inevitably and directly. That event, however, did shed a ray of light into a dark place. What it disclosed, if we are not blinded by our own indignation, we may be able to use for the purposes of our safety.

It had always been a mystery why, almost from the moment that the old Government and Parliament of Northern Ireland were abolished, the British government dedicated itself to recreating some imitation or other of what had broken down and been destroyed. The simplest course, one supposed, and the course that would have encountered fewest obstacles, would have been to treat Ulster, for which H.M.G. and Parliament were now directly responsible, just like a real part of the U.K. - the more so, as all tests of opinion showed that this would be overwhelmingly acceptable to the so-called minority as well as the so-called majority. It was, therefore, with incomprehension that one watched - and fought against - the creation by the Heath government of a set-up in Ulster which would be inherently unworkable and which neither existed in any other part of the Kingdom nor would for a moment be tolerated there.

Now we have the answer to the puzzle, and to many other

puzzling features of the years between 1973 and the present. The disastrous meeting of Thatcher and FitzGerald last month stands revealed as the latest stage in a planned process of transforming "the totality of relationships within these islands". The central feature of that transformation is to be the creation of an all-Ireland state, and the great prize to crown the achievement is to be the entry of that state into Nato, thus filling the gravest of all the gaps in the American strategy for Europe and the Atlantic. The key which opens the door is to be an Anglo-Irish institution in which Ulster is to be represented as a third and distinct element and thus drawn progressively into economic and political relations with the Irish Republic. Of all this the essential prerequisite is to have in existence an Ulster representative institution.

One never quite understood before why the 1973 power-sharing set-up was deliberately wrecked before it got off the ground through the British government insisting upon the Sunningdale Agreement as a precondition. We now realise that Sunningdale was not an optional extra. It was what the whole show was in aid of - the keystone of the arch. Incidentally, the name of the Foreign Minister in Cosgrave's government at the time is curiously familiar; it was Garret FitzGerald. The function of the power-sharing executive and assembly was not primarily to govern; nobody would invent such a crazy structure for that purpose. It was to provide the Ulster element for a Council of Ireland.

In the event, it turned out that FitzGerald and his British negotiating partners had rushed their fence. When the 1973 constitution - which, by the bye, is still on the statute book and

ready to be activated again if and when it might prove handy - they went back to the drawing board, undeterred and no less determined, but in more patient mood. The job, it appeared, was going to take a little more time. Meanwhile any step which would draw Ulster closer to Great Britain, which would identify it integrally with the United Kingdom, must be blocked, and the devolution option must be resolutely kept open.

The Constitutional Convention came and - unfortunately from the point of view of the operators - also went. It had been a near miss. The attempt of Bill Craig, their trusty then and since, to get the Convention converted into an informal gentlemen's arrangement by means of which offices, cars and salaries would be reinstated and an Ulster set-up recreated without fuss, might have come off; but the time was not ripe, recollections of Sunningdale and power-sharing were too fresh, the Ulster people had not yet been ground down into a sufficient state of frustration and helplessness. The majority Convention report, which was simply Stormont under a thin veneer, was not at all what had been wanted. It was shoved into the cupboard, and left there.

There were and are three features of so-called "direct rule" which differentiate Ulster from the "direct rule" under which, for instance, Wales and Scotland live, move and have their being as parts of the United Kingdom. These features are: Legislation by Order in Council; the absence of local government; and the lower level of representation in the House of Commons, which dated from 1920 and was the concomitant of a devolved government and parliament. These had, at any cost, to be preserved in the interval before another Sunningdale could be organized. Looking back, one cannot but admire the pertinacity with which the operators fought their defensive

battle in 1976-79. To our untutored astonishment at the time, the Government apparently preferred to keep the House sitting to all hours on Orders duplicating G.B. legislation rather than include Ulster in Acts of Parliament, and to drive junior ministers at Stormont to the verge of nervous breakdowns through attempting to cope with routine work of which even the existing local authorities could have relieved them if given the necessary powers. No: the now meaningless distinction in the 1975 Act between "reserved" and "transferred" subjects was rigorously maintained; and as for local government, the very mention of it was obscenity. The reason for this was not that the minority feared discrimination and maladministration: safeguards against that amply existed and could, if necessary, be reinforced. The real reason was that, of all the forms of devolution, only local government would not furnish an Ulster counterpart to participate in a Council of Ireland or (to use the modern phrase from the Thatcher-Haughey-FitzGerald dispensation) a "parliamentary third tier".

At one point only was the line breached. To the fury of those operating behind the scenes, Callaghan and Foot in 1977 conceded full Ulster representation in the House of Commons. A determined campaign of delay and obstruction waged against this from within the Northern Ireland Office only just failed by a few days to prevent the Bill from passing into an Act before the Labour government fell. Never mind: it could still be sabotaged, and the arrangements for doing this are already in train. You may be interested to know what they are. The Boundary Commission has completed its work, and its report is ready. Once presented, the implementation of that report must forthwith, in the form of an order, be proposed to Parliament by the Government. This should have been happening just about now, with the Order laid early in

Interesting
Analysis
here!

the New Year; but the Commission has been given the tip to delay its report for twelve months, or longer if possible. Why? Because it is hoped before that time to have the Ulster leg of the Anglo-Irish institution in place, whereupon the Government will say: "Now that Ulster is to be brought in on the broader scene, there is no point in increasing its representation in the House of Commons"; and they will proceed to vote down their own Order, for which Callaghan in 1969 presented them with a precedent.

But I must get back to the chronological order of my narrative. I had brought it down to May 1979, when the new Conservative government came in. Then was the time for the operators to re-activate their proceedings, especially as the IRA campaign was showing ominous signs of flagging. Within four months they had had a stroke of luck - I am charitably treating it as fortuitous - which gave them the signal for action. I refer to the simultaneous murder of Mountbatten and his companions and of eighteen soldiers at Warrenpoint, whose killing also took place from within the territory of the Republic. The result of these outrages, which was rather underlined than counteracted by the Pope's visit to Ireland shortly afterwards, was to bring enormous leverage to bear upon the British government to enter into relationships with the Irish Republic, relationships which, it was fondly hoped or malevolently suggested, would secure that country's co-operation in limiting and, if possible, terminating the activities of the IRA.

Accordingly a meeting took place in October 1979 between officials of the two countries, and a secret agreement was entered into which was the basis of all that has happened since. In return for an undeliverable and unspecific promise of "co-operation" against the IRA, Britain undertook to institute a process which

would lead, through a series of planned stages, to the absorption of Ulster into an all-Ireland state. The first of those stages would be to set up some sort of representative assembly in Ulster, a stage which the then Irish Premier, Jack Lynch, indiscreetly allowed himself to describe as "the first step towards unification" - something which it could only be if it was designed to make possible and inevitable the participation of Ulster in joint institutions with the Republic.

The bargain was sealed by the first Anglo-Irish prime ministerial meeting, between Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Lynch. Its firstfruits were the Atkins initiative, when, without prior warning or preparation, he announced at the end of October 1979 a conference of the Ulster political parties to discuss six options for Ulster's future - a list which did not include being governed like other parts of the Kingdom. It was Lord Elton who on this occasion let out the cat: when asked in the House of Lords what would be wrong with governing Ulster like Wales or Scotland, he snocked even that august assembly by blurting out that "such a policy would run counter to major aspirations not only in both parts of the Northern Ireland community but also in Great Britain and further afield".

Despite severe pressures from within and without, the Ulster Unionist Party declined to participate; and by April 1980 this refusal was seen to have rendered the Government's attempt abortive. Nevertheless, all through ^{the} summer of 1980 speculation continued that the Government would still proceed somehow to hold elections and create a local assembly. But by the autumn the plan had had to be modified: the order of events would be altered, the Anglo-Irish body would now be created first and the Ulster participation would be arranged afterwards.

Blackmailed by the first hunger strike and labouring under the ludicrous misapprehension that the Irish government could be either "helpful" or "unhelpful" in that context as they chose, the Prime Minister went to Dublin in December 1980 to see (this time) Charles Haughey and to authorise the plan which officials of the two countries had prepared behind her back. Her anger and embarrassment on sensing some of the implications were such that she refused to add a word of comment to a communique which asserted the joint concern of both countries in the internal affairs of Ulster and established joint studies for the purpose of developing - in notorious phrase - "the totality of relationships within these islands". The thanks that she - and Britain - got were the resumption of the hunger strike on an unprecedented scale and with unprecedented ruthlessness, and the sharp reversal in 1981 of the lower level of terrorist activity established in the two or three preceding years.

The heat was kept on. As early as March 1981 there were rumours, denied at the time, that the joint studies were producing proposals for a permanent Anglo-Irish institution with ministerial, official and representative tiers. In fact, exactly this appeared in the communique of the next prime ministerial meeting - this time in London with Garret FitzGerald on 6th November. It was only with great reluctance, a reluctance candidly expressed by FitzGerald after the meeting, that the third tier had had to be deferred in default of an Ulster component. Frantic efforts had been made by the Northern Ireland Office, working through disaffected or ambitious members of the Ulster Unionist Party executive, to split the Unionist Party and hustle it into accepting, in the sacred name of "devolution", the creation of a local set-up which would serve the purpose of the plan. The planners knew that, once established, any such body could

be browbeaten or cajoled into participating in all-Ireland institutions by the threat that otherwise Ulster's future would be settled over their heads in their absence and the promise that co-operation would be rewarded by economic and financial benefits and concessions.

Fortunately, out of desperation to get something on the ground for November, the official confederacy had overreached itself and tried to settle for an Ulster advisory council in the interim. This was Humphrey Atkins' appointed body of MPs, MEPs and district councillors, which perished about the same time as the departure of that Secretary of State himself, in gales of laughter - only to make a furtive reappearance in still more attenuated form in the November communique. And so, with the disastrous meeting of 6th November, accomplishing the next stage in the forced march to an all-Ireland state, we reach the bloodstained present, in which the IRA has once again taken its cue and the people of Ireland are paying the stakes in the international Power-Game being played with Ulster's existence. On the morrow of that fateful meeting officials were already back at work preparing for the next stage in Dublin and resuming their endeavours by subversion, bribery or deceit to trick or tempt the Ulster majority into going along the path laid down for it by its enemies. You can hear them at work whenever the Secretary of State opens his mouth. !

It was ironically significant that, in almost his first sentence after taking office, Prior slipped out the word "international". Did he know, one wonders, what he was saying when he used it? That question is part of a larger and graver question. Does the Cabinet, does the Prime Minister, know what has been agreed in their name by British officials with Irish officials - yes, and with

American officials? Do they understand the part that they themselves, as principals or puppets, are playing in the plot of selling into bondage a portion of their own country and people in order to purchase the goodwill of doubtful allies and buy off the hostility of enemies?

I do not know the answer to that question. Stupidity and knavery, innocence and falsehood, are so closely intertwined in politics that it is hard to know where the one stops and the other starts. What I think I know is that the British people, if they were aware of what is being attempted, whether by their rulers or by their servants, would not be "consenting unto it". For Ulster and its people there is one sane and rational hope, and one only. It lies where it has always lain. It lies in the Union. In all doubt and danger, amidst all equivocation, trickery and treachery, the one golden rule of safety abides: the Union, the whole Union and nothing but the Union. Ask no more. Accept nothing else.
Stand firm.