Until recently, two views of the relations between the governments of Northern Ireland and those of the Irish Free State and, later, the Republic of Ireland, have predominated. One view holds that contact between Belfast and Dublin was at best “cursory and truculent”; the second view imagines that there was no contact at all. Michael Kennedy’s recent monograph *Division and Consensus: The Politics of Cross-Border Relations in Ireland* (2000) demonstrates that neither of these traditional views is correct. The two governments actually used indirect contacts, secret government meetings, and behind-closed-door exchanges between civil servants to maintain far more interaction than previous accounts suggest. Tourism played an important, if largely ignored, role in these contacts. The industry was actually a model of cooperative success and a source of dialogue almost from the introduction of Partition. Tourist authorities quietly collaborated on a variety of matters and tourism officials lobbied both Irish governments to establish a formal, public relationship on matters of common interest.

The story of North-South tourism collaboration from 1924 to the establishment of “Tourism Brand Ireland” initiative in the late 1990s demonstrates that tourism developers cared little about the border, and believed that economic interests trumped the question of reunification. Between 1924 and 1959, tourism developers proved that successful cross-border collaboration was possible; the industry in effect modeled the type of North-South relationship that Seán Lemass first officially proposed in 1959. A major topic of conversation during the 1965 Lemass-O’Neill meeting—the first time two heads of government in Ireland had met face-to-face—tourism continued to be an important area of cross-border collaboration, even during the “Troubles.” Yet, tourism was not immune to the conflict that has infected Irish politics throughout much of the past century. Even as tourism inspired cooperation, it also simultaneously created challenges to the existing order by focusing still more attention on the

border, and by giving the two states a vehicle for promoting their respective political agendas.

The Irish Tourist Association (ITA) and Ulster Tourist Development Association (UTDA) maintained a congenial relationship from the beginning of the Irish tourist movement in 1924 and 1925. The Irish Tourist Association kept a careful eye on development activities in the North, noting with interest that the UTDA began its efforts by compiling and publishing lists of hotels and by encouraging railway companies to issue first-class tickets to excursionists. The Free State’s ITA also made an attempt to review and publicize the publications of its counterpart. For example, the UTDA’s Guide to Ulster was declared “delightfully written by one of the most brilliant Ulstermen.” When the UTDA began publishing a tourist magazine similar to the ITA’s Irish Travel, the ITA was quick to offer congratulations and to boast about the “most cordial relations” between the tourism bodies in North and South. The ITA explained that

We trust that those who visit the North will also visit the South; we trust too that those who visit the South will travel to the North. There are four provinces of Ireland, all of them beautiful, and Ulstermen will be satisfied if the stranger to Ireland remembers, when he comes to it, that there is no boundary to beauty. We are divided by law into two governments, yet there remains only one Ireland.

The ITA did not overtly challenge the legitimacy of the border, but its guidebooks included sections on Ulster attractions and treated Ireland as a single unit—primarily because it understood that tourists viewed the country in geographic, not political, terms.

After 1960 the notion that “there remains only one Ireland” was widely rejected, but matters were different earlier. In the realm of tourism, at least, cooperation and goodwill prevailed from the 1920s through 1940s. At the annual meeting of the Ulster Association in 1930, for example, Viscount Craigavon, prime minister of Northern Ireland, informed that organization that he was

2. The Irish Tourist Association was a private organization founded by a collective of patriotically minded businessmen in 1924 to pursue the goal of developing tourism in the Irish Free State. It was recognized as the Free State’s primary tourist development body in 1925. The Ulster Tourist Development Association (UTDA) was founded in Northern Ireland at almost the same time and had very much the same goals and a similar membership.
6. Irish Travel (April, 1927), 166.
7. For an example, see Irish Tourist Association, Ireland: Official Publication (Dublin, 1929).
“delighted” to learn of the close relationship between the tourism bodies in the different jurisdictions. He even commented that “Ulster was glad to pass on her tourists to the Free State, and he was equally sure that the Free State was equally glad to pass hers to the Six Counties.”8 One indicator of the cordial relationship was that the UTDA maintained a presence at ITA annual meetings into the 1940s.9 After the Emergency, the Irish Tourist Association operated an information bureau in Belfast.10 This cross-border cooperation contrasted sharply to the constitutional opposition that raged between North and South, and represented a rare public display of collaboration during a period when the two states were officially divided by a deep chasm of mutual antagonism.11

North-South collaboration continued even after the formal establishment of statutory tourist boards on both sides of the border. Nearly ten years after the foundation of the Republic’s semistate Irish Tourist Board in 1939, the Development of Tourist Traffic Act of 1948 established the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB).12 The NITB was funded by government subsidies and private contributors, and was intended to register accommodation, provide development grants, and “otherwise to make provision for the encouragement and development of tourist traffic.” Like its Southern counterpart, the NITB quickly established a relationship with the private tourist associations (ITA, UTDA), and agreed to a coordinated tourist development effort with the UTDA.13

Publicly, however the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and the Irish Tourist Board were at odds with one another, and by 1950 their collaboration was almost entirely conducted behind closed doors. The challenges faced by the various organizations are made clear by the NITB’s interest in participating in An Tóstal, a month-long tourist festival that was conducted each spring by the Republic’s tourist developers between 1953 and 1958. Initially, Bob Frizzell, director of the NITB, traveled to the Republic to discuss Ulster’s participation in the festival.14 At the same time, however, the Irish Anti-Partition League also asked

10. J. O’Sullivan to Seamus Fitzgerald, 11 September 1951 (authorship uncertain); and J. O’Brien to J. Fitzpatrick, 8 September 1951, Cork Archives Institute, SFP, PR6/1023; hereafter cited as CAI.
11. Kennedy, Division and Consensus, p. 3.
to participate in An Tóstal festivities. Tourism authorities were faced with a challenging problem and quickly contacted the government for advice. Although the Department of Industry and Commerce was adamant that no cooperation should take place between the two tourist authorities, the Department of External Affairs disagreed, arguing that An Tóstal would be a useful opportunity for cross-border cooperation. Both departments agreed that the Irish Anti-Partition League should not be offered a formal place in the festivities, but they decided that the league should be informed that it was welcome to distribute information at the events. In the end, it was determined that no official cooperation should take place either between tourist authorities in North and South or between Bord Fáilte and the Anti-Partition League.

Of course, even if the government had decided to pursue cooperation and the NITB had been invited to participate, the Northern counties would undoubtedly have pulled out before the opening ceremony, as the An Tóstal parade was overwhelmingly militaristic in character. Row upon row of soldiers passed by the damp viewing stands as military aircraft flew above in what a newsreel commentator billed “one of the biggest military reviews in Ireland’s history.” Upon learning about the plans, Frizzell quietly told Kevin O’Doherty of the Irish Tourist Board, “We’d be with you if not for the Bloody Sunday stuff.” As far as the North was concerned, An Tóstal amounted to little more than a display of antipartition sentiment—political theater on a grand scale.

While the Irish government was usually content merely to offer advice on the content of tourist publications in the hope of ensuring positive “cultural propaganda,” it was more forceful when representations of the border with Northern Ireland were involved. For example, when the Irish Tourist Association published a guide titled *Introducing Ireland* in 1950, the Department of External Affairs was stimulated to provide editorial feedback. The ITA’s secretary, J. Fitzpatrick, was told that the department would not accept “the statement [that] ... the Six Counties ‘are governed by the parliament of Northern Ireland under the British Commonwealth.’” Instead, External Affairs demanded that the

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15. Department of Industry and Commerce, Memorandum for the Government. (a) Six County Participation in An Tóstal, 1953; (b) Anti-Partition Propaganda on the Occasion of An Tóstal, 1953, 11 October 1952. National Archives Ireland, DT, S13 087/E1; hereafter cited as NAI.

16. An Tóstal: Directions Sought by An Bord Fáilte Concerning Anti-Partition Propaganda, 17 October 1952 (NAI, DT, S13087/E1) In fact, according to Kevin O’Doherty, a Tóstal committee was actually established in Newry, County Down (O’Doherty interview), but it does not appear in An Tóstal: Official Souvenir Guide (Dublin: Fógra Fáilte, 1953) in Michael Gorman’s private collection.


18. O’Doherty, interview.
emphasis be placed on British rule of the province. The department wanted the paragraph to read:

The constitution of Ireland states that “the national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands, and the territorial seas.”¹⁹ By an act of the British parliament in 1920, however, six counties, part of the province of Ulster, were separated from the rest of Ireland and are administered by a local parliament subject to the British parliament. The remaining Twenty-Six Counties are under the authority of the government of the Republic of Ireland in Dublin. The total population of Ireland is 4,250,000.²⁰

The revised wording more accurately represented government policy by drawing attention to the perceived occupation by the British government of Ireland’s six northeastern counties.

Despite such contretemps, the statutory tourist authorities continued to maintain a closer relationship than is usually imagined, and tourist staffs on both sides of the border were in regular—if not public—contact. For example, Fógra Fáilte, the Republic’s tourism publicity board between 1952 and 1955, published the first edition of the Ireland Guide in the early 1950s, including a section on the Six Counties. In order to make certain that the information about Northern sites was correct, the publicity board solicited fact-checking assistance from the NITB. Although the map in the guide did not depict the border, and though mention of the different governments was minimized, there were no objections from the tourist authorities in the North because the entire transaction was carried out secretly.²¹ Michael Gorman, longtime editor of Ireland of the Welcomes, remembers that, “We cooperated without shouting it from the rooftops. We got on with it.” From the perspective of the two tourist boards, concerns about how the border was presented on maps or about how the two governments were described in guidebooks were merely “political posturing” and of relatively little concern except when involving their respective governments on a public level.²²

In addition to their limited cooperation on guidebooks, the two boards willingly carried each other’s publicity materials at offices outside of Ireland,

¹⁹. The precise language of the Irish Constitution states that the Irish nation includes “every person born in the island of Ireland, which includes the islands and seas, to be part of the Irish nation” (Article 2), and that “It is the firm will of the Irish Nation, in harmony and friendship, to unite all the people who share the territory of the island of Ireland, in all the diversity of their identities and traditions . . .” (Article 3).
²¹. The guide stated simply that “The area known as ‘the Six Counties’ or ‘Northern Ireland’ is, at present, under the control of a Parliament in Belfast, which is subordinate to the British Parliament.” Fógra Fáilte, Ireland Guide (Dublin, [1953?]).
and individual members of the two boards cultivated friendships on the other side. Kevin O’Doherty recalls a close relationship with NITB staff members whom he regularly visited in Belfast; he stayed with them during his trips. In short, ideas were exchanged, friendships formed, and materials distributed.

Cooperation—whether official or not—was essential for tourism development in Ireland. As far as the leaders of the British Travel and Holidays Association (BTHA) were concerned, promoting the Six Counties independently from the Republic was a losing proposition, and they communicated this fact to T. J. O’Driscoll, the head of Bord Fáilte, through the Irish ambassador to Holland in 1958. “Whatever the political considerations might be,” the ambassador reported,

the fact remained that fishing possibilities, for example, did not stop at the border. It made no sense to suggest motoring tours, conducted or unconducted, which remained strictly within the narrow confines of the Six Counties. Even the map which he [a BTHA official] showed me of Great Britain and the Six Counties looked ridiculous on account of the fact that the Six Counties were hemmed in on the South and West by a land area which was left blank. In short, he personally wondered whether something could not be done to overcome this odd situation. From time to time his office exhibited at fairs and exhibitions, for example the Utrecht fair, and he thought it would be of benefit to both of us if the 26 Counties and they could cooperate in some manner for mutual benefit to bring their geographically neighbouring attractions to the notice of the touring public.24

From Bord Fáilte’s perspective, cooperation with Britain would increase Ireland’s presence in its most important marketplace. In 1958, acting with full government approval,25 the board pursued a BTHA offer that included the distribution of Bord Fáilte materials at BTHA offices in Britain, an Irish presence in BTHA booths at fairs and exhibitions where Ireland had no other presence, combined efforts to attract foreign journalists and to carry out market-research activities, and even the inclusion of both Britain and Ireland in various publicity materials.26 From the British perspective, the proposal was designed to ease the difficult burden of marketing Northern Ireland by linking Six County publicity to Ireland as a whole. Problematically, any agreement requiring that Northern Ireland work closely and publicly with Southern tourism authorities struck fear into the hearts of Northern officials.

23. O’Doherty, interview.
Official southern policy toward the North changed dramatically after Seán Lemass became taoiseach in 1959. In contrast to the isolationist policy practiced publicly during de Valéra’s tenure, the Republic now began to promote formal cooperation. While one cannot directly link the policy change and the new taoiseach’s long relationship to tourism development, Lemass was almost certainly aware of the relationship described above. By 1959, Lemass already had considerable experience with tourism, both as a long-serving minister for industry and commerce and as the framer of virtually every major piece of Irish tourism legislation between 1939 and 1953. He also enjoyed a long-lasting friendship with J. P. O’Brien, one of the most important tourism development figures between 1925 and the early 1950s. From O’Brien Lemass derived much of his knowledge of tourism. The North-South relationship was very likely a topic of discussion between the two former comrades in the Irish Civil War, and the model provided by previous tourism cooperation probably was not far from the taoiseach’s mind when he offered his new policy in 1959.

On July 21, 1959, Lemass informed the Dáil that a new policy toward the North might be worth pursuing. After stressing that the government’s view about the eventual unification of Ireland had not changed, Lemass argued that a committee dealing with internal trading matters between North and South might be helpful:

Because of our hopes for the eventual economic unity of the country, we could not in principle be adverse to considering adjustments in our trading arrangements which might expand trade opportunities for bona-fide Irish products originating in the Six-County area. Could the very practical difficulties which would arise in working out arrangements for that purpose in present circumstances be reduced by detailed examination of them? Are there possibilities for a combination of effort in the field of tourist trade, an all-Irish promotional campaign which would benefit the whole country? In both North and South vigorous efforts are being made to attract and develop new industrial projects. Could these efforts be coordinated with mutual advantage? Are there problems arising in cross-channel shipping which would be worth joint examination?

The comments caught the Northern government off guard, but did not elicit an immediate refusal to consider possibilities so long as Northern Ireland might also secure some political benefit from any resulting dialogue. Rather than present their concerns publicly, Northern officials chose to communicate through a back-channel correspondence between John E. Sayers, editor of the Belfast Telegraph, and Cork-based journalist Dr. John J. Horgan. Believing that

28. Speech by Seán Lemass to Dáil Eireann, July 21, 1959, NAI, DT, S16272A.
Lemass was “reaching out towards better relations,” Sayers suggested that the taoiseach should “say something more helpful” about “the question of recognition” that “governs everything.”29

Soon after Lemass suggested further cooperation, both Bord Fáilte and the government of the Republic increased efforts to encourage cross-border projects. Early in 1960, Michael Gorman traveled to Belfast to investigate the possibility of buying advertising in the city’s leading Unionist paper, the *Belfast Telegraph*. From the board’s perspective, the paper offered a direct connection to the wealthiest section of Ulster’s elite—the group most likely to travel to the Republic on holiday—but it was unclear whether the *Telegraph* would be willing to sell advertising to a semi-state body from the Republic. Bord Fáilte need not have worried. Gorman quickly learned that “there was no barrier at all to publishing Irish advertising in the main unionist paper” as long as the bill was paid.30

The results were less positive in terms of developing formal cooperative efforts between the two governments or between the two tourist boards. At the government level, Lord Brookeborough rejected Southern overtures rather than face staunch Unionist opposition.31 Bord Fáilte had found the same resistance several months earlier, when Gorman contacted Frizzell about possible official cooperation between the two tourist boards. Frizzell rejected the suggestion, saying that it would be “extremely difficult to arrange,” even though there was definitely interest in anything that would prove financially advantageous to Northern tourism. Frizzell concluded by recommending that the private cooperation that persisted should be maintained “even if the popular understanding of united effort is not administered.”32

Though few innovations took place in 1962, the Irish government continued to push the idea of cooperation, and the taoiseach even requested that a list of potential areas for common discussion be drawn up; tourism was one of seventeen topics included in the list.33 Still, the government of Northern Ireland remained immobile until the succession of Captain Terence O’Neill as prime minister on March 25, 1963. Almost immediately, nationalist members of the Northern assembly began asking whether O’Neill would be willing to meet with Seán Lemass.34 Over the next several months the two leaders engaged in a public dialogue in the newspapers, prompting Lemass to call for his ministers

29. John A. Sayers to John Horgan, 22 July 1959, NAI, DT, S16272A.
30. Gorman, interview.
to revisit the list of potential points of cooperation. By this time Lemass hoped that an annual or biannual meeting of civil servants could be arranged to discuss matters of mutual interest. There was reason to be hopeful. On October 18, O’Neill informed a meeting of Young Unionists that he would “take the initiative” toward creating a dialogue with the Republic, although he also demanded that any such meetings would require concessions, specifically “an end to public statements either in Ireland or abroad about the ‘ultimate reunification of our country,’ and the ‘evils of partition,’ the ‘Six-County area,’ and similar subjects.”

In spite of the promising signs, massive obstacles lay in the road ahead. In the Republic, Lemass felt unable to abandon what he called “a widespread hope that in a new atmosphere it may be possible in time to envisage some wider agreement which will restore the old unity of the country.” At the same time, while O’Neill was clearly interested in moving forward, he could not abandon a staunch defense of the border. From his perspective, cooperation was impossible as long as the Republic’s principal objective was to “undermine and destroy the status quo.” Even “with the best will in the world” O’Neill could not “submit to this kind of talk and hope to keep the Unionist Party in good temper.” If any cooperation was going to take place, compromise was required.

Tourist authorities believed that tourism offered a bridge across the seemingly intractable political divide separating the two governments. Behind closed doors, tourism had already provided an example of cooperation and compromise. For example, Bord Fáilte assumed responsibility for the ITA office in Belfast following the creation of the Regional Tourist Organisations in 1963–64 and the subsequent disbandment of the ITA. The transfer was smooth, and behind-the-scenes cooperation continued much as before—proving that it was possible for a semi-state body from the South to function in Northern Ireland without creating conflict. Even so, the Tourist Board believed strongly that tourism might play a greater role in promoting further cooperative projects between the two countries. As Bord Fáilte’s T. J. O’Driscoll noted in March, 1964,
Long before Thomas Cook made a business out of it, it was accepted that travel broadens the mind. A practical knowledge of the other party, a broadening of one’s outlook, and you have the ingredients for co-operation. These are the obvious factors, whether the field be international or local. So tourism looks a good prospect to anyone interested in developing co-operation.42

Tourism, as the largest single item in world trade and still “a growth industry,” promised “significant and praiseworthy . . . social, educational, and cultural” effects as well as economic benefits.43 Of course, although O’Driscolldid not mention it, there was already a long history of cooperation and close ties between the members of the respective tourist bodies of North and South on which to base future collaboration.

O’Driscolll’s hopes for improved North-South tourism cooperation were not primarily altruistic: he also wanted the significant financial benefits of an alliance. Although he believed that Northern Ireland would benefit disproportionately from any collaboration because the South was “better endowed with tourist attractions than Northern Ireland and had a substantially larger and better funded tourist board,” the common tourist market enjoyed by the two states created “room for co-operation between the tourist boards, and indeed between them and the British Travel and Holidays Association, in the development of tourist traffic in Ireland, which is more saleable as a unit than as two disjointed parts.” The political divisions were hard to explain to foreigners, and any promotion of Ireland as a travel destination would be “more advantageous” if efforts were combined.44

O’Driscolll suggested a variety of areas of potential cooperation. These included relaxing border restrictions, the expansion of British coach tours in both Irelands, coordinated road signposting, the creation of special tours for those interested in archeology, farming, education, and other such topics, the exploitation of fishing and hunting resources, and especially the development of joint publicity programs. Citing O’Neill, the head of Bord Fáilte urged cooperation in “the three Ps [of] ‘Planning, Preservation, and Promotion.”45

Northern Ireland also offered positive thinking about the potential for public tourism cooperation. In a letter to O’Neill, Northern Ireland’s minister for commerce Brian Faulkner stressed that there was much to be gained from work-

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43. O’Driscolll lists the NITB’s grant as a mere £150,000 with a staff of thirty. This compares with Bord Fáilte whose grant was now £1.5 million with a staff of 170. O’Driscolll, Memorandum, 4–5.
44. O’Driscolll, Memorandum, 6.
45. O’Driscolll, Memorandum. 9.
ing with the Republic on tourism, assuming that the content of joint publications
could be agreed upon. Faulkner believed in deepening the level of collaboration
despite the risks: “Tourism is a growth point in our economy, and in the past two
years I have virtually reconstituted the Tourist Board, bringing on men with fresh
ideas and a sense of urgency. . . . I believe that we would favour a gradual
improvement in cooperation,” especially because the South had begun to
demonstrate a strong willingness to accept Northern concerns.46

The NITB was particularly anxious to secure improved publicity in foreign
markets. At the time, the BTHA handled Northern Ireland’s publicity effort
abroad in exchange for a small grant. Although satisfied that the “BTHA was
generous in relation to the grant,” the Northern tourist authorities felt that
their message was ultimately “submerged in the wider United Kingdom effort.”
They also noted that prospective tourists seldom approached the BTHA when
interested in “Ireland,” but instead directed their inquiries to Bord Fáilte. Bord
Fáilte’s advertising, coupled with materials from Aer Lingus, dwarfed their own
efforts. The NITB believed that its message was getting lost and that coopera-
tion on publicity with the South might alleviate some of these problems. Even
so, there remained strong concern about the risk of providing the South with
control over publicity materials. After considerable cabinet discussion it was
agreed to proceed, but only if an approval process could be established that
allowed the government the final decision on any joint efforts.47

The unprecedented first meeting between Taoiseach Seán Lemass and Prime
Minister Terrence O’Neill took place on January 14, 1965, but it remained a
closely guarded secret until the moment of the event itself in the hope of staving
off inevitable protest, especially in Northern Ireland. Secrecy was essential:
O’Neill “wanted no untoward incident by a tiny and irresponsible minority to
tarnish an occasion from which much good might come.”48 As it was, as soon
as the meeting was announced, Rev. Ian Paisley led protests outside of Storm-
ont, displaying placards denouncing any cooperation or discussion with the
Republic49 and declaring O’Neill to be a “traitor” and a “Lundy.”50 Similarly,
Lemass received negative feedback from nationalists in the Republic as well as
from Irish-American organizations that questioned the cooperation policy and

46. Brian Faulkner, Cabinet Memorandum: Co-Operation with the Irish Republic: Tourist Pub-
licity, 8 January 1965, PRONI, CAB/4/1289/5.
50. “Only Warnock and Boal Out of Tune at Stormont. World Congratulates for N-S Talks—
demanded to know if “we therefore just sit and wait it out, waiting for the Orangemen to see the light?”

The meeting itself was cordial and took place in front of the fireplace at the prime minister’s residence in Belfast. O’Neill declared it an historic occasion, cracked open a bottle of champagne, and told Lemass that he was anxious to begin exploring potential cross-border cooperation. According to Lemass, the topics discussed were chosen because they would be politically advantageous while raising relatively few political differences. The two men quickly agreed on the value of developing cross-border tourism links, and it was decided to explore several areas for cooperation; these included the possibility of joint promotion abroad, the encouragement of “inter-flow between the two parts of Ireland,” the abolition of the triptyque system for private cars—which required a complicated document that demonstrated a clean police record and proof that the driver had a legitimate reason for crossing the border—beginning the next April, and consideration of permitting the free passage of hired cars through border checkpoints. It was critical to eliminate any inconveniences that travelers might encounter. Lemass and O’Neill also discussed the launching a joint venture to develop Enniskillen Airfield, a regional airport that would facilitate more efficient travel to Sligo, Donegal, and Leitrim, as well as attracting more tourists to Fermanagh and Tyrone. Finally, the two leaders affirmed that their respective ministers with authority for tourism development, Erskine Childers in the Republic and Brian Faulkner in the North, should hold joint talks in the near future.

Despite the easy initial agreement, Childers expected challenges ahead. From his perspective, cooperation with Belfast on tourism was primarily important because it would ensure a close working relationship between the British Travel and Holidays Association (by then renamed the British Travel Association, or BTA) and Bord Fáilte—a relationship that the NITB had previously vetoed. Childers anticipated that cross-border efforts would proceed in three stages, beginning with the mutual distribution of previously published information, moving on to the development of a brochure to promote “the whole of Ireland as a single unit,” and, finally, extending to the joint presentation of Britain and

51. Thomas Duffy to Seán Lemass, 3 February 1965, NAI, DT, 98/6/429.
52. Taoiseach’s Visit to Belfast, 14 January 1965, NAI, DT, 98/6/429.
55. 16 January 1965, NAI, DT, 98/6/149.
57. 14 January 1965, NAI, DT, 98/6/429.
Ireland as a “combined tourist area.” Although few potential problems were anticipated in either the first or the third stage, Childers expected that the single brochure would be problematic because

the North may be expected to insist that their separate identity be preserved in any common brochure, and that in any map the border be seen, that Derry be shown as Londonderry, and possibly that any map of the whole of Ireland show the Six County Area in a separate colour and that our area be labeled the Republic of Ireland.58

Faulkner and Childers met for the first time on February 4, 1965, and agreed “that the tourist boards should examine the various possibilities for cooperation on purely economic grounds.” Although both sides considered the production of joint publicity materials a major priority, it was noted that the project would raise “certain constitutional issues” which would require government approval.59 Faulkner, in particular, emphasized the need for acceptable language in any tourist publications, insisting that joint materials should clearly reflect the separate roles of the Northern and Southern tourist boards, although it would be acceptable to use the word “Ireland” to denote the entire thirty-two counties.60 In early April, the respective ministers simultaneously announced a joint committee consisting of members of both tourist boards in Belfast and Dublin.60 The joint committee was assigned four major tasks:

(a) to consult on any improvements that may be desirable and practicable in order to facilitate and encourage cross-border tourist traffic in either direction;
(b) to consult on the improvement of tourist statistics;
(c) to consult on sponsored visits by travel agents and other promotional efforts;
(d) to make recommendations to the two Ministers on further measures of cooperation.62

From the Republic, the committee included Brendan O’Regan, the chairman of Bord Fáilte, and Dr. T. J. O’Driscoll, its director-general; from Northern Ireland, it included W. L. Stephens and J. J. Frizzell, the chairman and general manager of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, respectively.

60. Erskine Childers to Seán Lemass, 5 February 1965, NAI, DT, 98/6/429.
Although “cordial and constructive,”63 the first formal talks between the tourist boards on May 12 raised challenging problems.64 On May 26, 1965, Faulkner reported to the Northern cabinet that nomenclature was proving troublesome. Initial word choices had already implied that the NITB was little more than a branch office of Bord Fáilte, while officials in the South refused to accept clear usage of the term “Irish Republic” to denote the Twenty-Six Counties, preferring the broader term “Ireland” which, the North feared, would ensure their country’s “absorption.” More troubling still, Faulkner said that the two boards “were not always easy to control,” and he feared that they might release materials before approval by their respective governments.65 Dublin was similarly wary of the language and design options forwarded by the North—issues which Belfast had decided to push in order “to test the Republic’s willingness to recognize the constitutional ‘facts of life,’” because “in the event of a breach of joint agreements, it could be clearly shown that it was the Republic which had been unreasonable.”66 It is hardly surprising that the government in Belfast wanted such tests as even after the initial Lemass-O’Neill meeting, Lemass continued to repeat that “our aim is to re-unite the Irish people in one nation and one state”—hardly an objective acceptable to authorities in the North.67

Ultimately, a compromise was reached when the North agreed to allow the use of “Ireland” for the map as a whole, as long as “Northern Ireland” was clearly displayed on any map of the country along with a clearly marked border.68 The NITB was to be mentioned first in all publications, reducing the risk of “absorption”; “Londonderry” would be used rather than “Derry”; colors would be deployed carefully so as to avoid provocation; and there was a mutual agreement that “no statement should be made suggesting that Ireland is one in the constitutional sense.”69

Following approval of the preparation of a joint tourist publication, a preliminary draft of the first such document was prepared.70

64. Bord Fáilte reported only that their talks were “very optimistic,” while the challenges regarding word choice, map design, etc. were addressed only behind closed doors. See Bord Fáilte, Press Release, 12 May 1965, NAI, DT, 98/6/431.
65. Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held at Stormont Castle: Co-operation on Tourist Development, 3 June 1965, PRONI, CAB/4/1308/1.
66. Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held at Stormont Castle: Co-operation with the Irish Republic: Joint Tourist Literature, 7 October 1965, PRONI, CAB/4/1315/12.
68. Letter to [?] Erskine Childers from [?] Brian Faulkner, 6 October 1965, PRONI, CAB/4/1315/6.
and Ireland, sponsored by the British Travel Association, NITB, and Bord Fáilte, the brochure was submitted for government approval in June, 1966. In many ways it differed little from previous publications, as it emphasized gorgeous scenery, horse racing, salmon, legends, castles, quality dining, and various historic sites. The draft document paid particular attention to the Giant’s Causeway—which was included in Bord Fáilte’s Ireland of the Welcomes for the first time early in 1966—71—as well as to Killarney, the newly opened Bunratty Castle, and the quaint fishing villages of County Down as ideal attractions. The guide suggested that tourists should visit and compare “the two largest and delightfully different cities of Dublin and Belfast,” as well as the “Lakelands” of Fermanagh, Wicklow, and Wexford, the mountains of Mourne, Glendalough, the Ulster Folk Museum, and Connemara, in addition to mentioning the ancestral homesteads of various American presidents. The back cover of the guide recommended several English sites, including Hadrian’s Wall, Blenheim, Stratford-upon-Avon, and Windsor Castle.72 In general, the publication provided a remarkable balance of sites in all three jurisdictions.

The government of Northern Ireland greeted the draft with a number of objections to the word choices made by the tourist authorities. In particular, Faulkner pointed out that the brochure used the term “Britain” to refer to the island of Great Britain. He worried that if “we now agree to its use in the text as covering Great Britain only, this may imply that Northern Ireland is not part of ‘Britain’ as used in other contexts,” and he argued that “Great Britain” should be used to avoid confusion. Otherwise, there were no major problems save the guide’s use of “Derry” rather than “Londonderry.”73

More concrete changes in tourism policy, such as easing border restrictions, proved much easier to achieve, as many of the particulars had been agreed even before the Lemass-O’Neill meeting.74 Almost immediately following the first talks it was reported that previous restrictions would be abandoned in March, 1966, thus allowing car owners to cross the border freely in and out of Northern Ireland—a significant improvement for visitors because the restrictions had been “a deep source of grievance for British and other visitors to the Republic (especially Americans),” and also because “most times they [tourists] could not take a hired car into Northern Ireland.”75 As talks continued, it was agreed that the two tourist boards should work to reduce the easement restrictions governing lakes, streams, and scenic drives in the border areas that had previously

72 Visit Ireland and Britain (draft), 1966, PRONI, CAB/4/1342/7.
73 Brian Faulkner, Memorandum: Joint Tourist Publicity, 31 August 1966, PRONI, CAB/4/1342/7.
74 Memorandum (Confidential): Tourism, 7 January 1965, NAI, DT, 98/6/429.
been difficult to reach owing to border limitations. The negotiators also wanted to develop joint machinery for staff training and to collaborate on the production of tourist films and the promotion of travel-agency and journalistic visits to Ireland.\(^76\) Lastly, it was decided to collaborate on the compilation of accurate tourist statistics.\(^77\)

Despite these advances, events in Northern Ireland soon began to undermine the cooperative activities. In May and June, 1966, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) murdered two young men in Belfast, prompting O’Neill to declare the organization illegal.\(^78\) Sectarian anger quickly swelled, and an increasing number of civil disturbances soon made trips to Northern Ireland by senior Southern officials too dangerous. Lemass decided to stall further cooperation until the autumn in order to provide O’Neill with breathing room.\(^79\) As Michael Kennedy observes, “the events of the summer of 1966 were a turning-point in North-South relations. O’Neill was increasingly on the defensive, the forces of extremism were stronger than ever, and the UVF was now a potent threat.”\(^80\)

From June, 1966, until the beginning of the “Troubles” in August, 1969, North-South cooperation took place in a climate of uncertainty and tension. Significant events did indeed take place: the publication of the first shared guide in early 1967, the agreement between tourism officials to begin work on still more guidebooks during the summer of 1967, and the launching of a joint publicity campaign on the Continent.\(^81\) Yet, there was much less interest in joint tourist development or in other areas of cooperation, and Belfast officials expressed little interest in high-level meetings.\(^82\)

Although tensions derailed cross-border efforts at higher levels, the cross-border tourism committee continued to meet through the summer of 1969 to discuss the production of further publications, the introduction of a common hotel-grading system, and even the launching of a computer booking service for hotel reservations.\(^83\) Inside the tourist industry, at least, there remained room

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78. The first killing was on May 28 “when the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) murdered a young man in a case of mistaken identity” and the second was on June 26 “when the same organization shot dead a Catholic and injured two others in a sectarian attack outside a pub in Malvern Street in west Belfast.” Michael Kennedy, *Division and Consensus*, 270.
80. Kennedy, *Division and Consensus*, p. 271.
for optimism. Northern tourism was growing at an impressive rate and had increased by £1.9 million in 1968 over the preceding year. Officials were optimistic that the NITB’s revenue target of £32 million in 1970 was realistic.84 Likewise, the Republic continued to enjoy impressive tourism growth, increasing its earnings by IR£10.1 million more than in 1967, and experienced increases from all its major markets.85

The beginning of the “Troubles” ended this period of growth, especially in Northern Ireland. In December, 1969, the Irish Travel Trade News reported that the NITB’s decade-long effort to develop tourism in Northern Ireland had been set back three years. In the short term, revenue for 1969 dropped by 13 percent compared with the previous year.86 Meanwhile in the South, Bord Fáilte announced in March, 1970, that the Republic had fallen behind the revenue goals defined in the Third Programme for Economic Expansion.87 Visitor numbers in the Republic dropped by a total of 25 percent between 1969 and 1972, bringing tourism revenue back to 1961 levels.88 It has been estimated that the Republic ultimately lost as much as IR£530 million between 1970 and 1978 as a result of violence in Northern Ireland.89 The long-term damage in Northern Ireland was even more pronounced: by 1972, tourism revenue had declined by some 60 percent.90 In 1974, the NITB reported that only peaceful circumstances would permit the development of a successful tourist industry, and that in the meantime there was nothing to do but “to prepare Northern Ireland’s tourist industry for the peace which will surely come.”91

At the government level in the South, there was a profound distrust of the political situation in Northern Ireland, but Taoiseach Jack Lynch stopped short of calling a halt to economic cooperation, despite growing concerns about the “success” of the endeavor.92 In 1971, the Department of Transport and Power released a report citing “minimal success” in cross-border efforts, but it refused
to end the program because Bord Fáilte believed that further benefits might eventually be achieved.93 Likewise, the NITB remained hopeful that cross-border projects would lead to an increase in the number of high-spending visitors from beyond the British Isles.94 The interest expressed by tourism authorities ensured that the tripartite talks between the British Tourist Authority,95 NITB, and Bord Fáilte continued; the discussions included cooperative promotion in North America, France, Germany, and Australia, joint research activities, and the standardization of tourism information.96

Regional concerns also played a role in convincing the government to continue North-South dialogue. In 1971, the office of the taoiseach was asked to pursue the development of waterways that spanned the border in West Cavan, South Fermanagh, and South Leitrim in order to provide the region with a boost in tourism revenue. The chairman of the Cross-Border Road Committee and Ballyconnell Public Waterways Branch, Frank Holland, begged for the removal of customs posts to facilitate increased tourist traffic by car. He also called for the clearance of the waterway from Carrick-on-Shannon, County Leitrim, to Belturbet, County Cavan, and along the route from Lough Erne to the Shannon. Holland demanded to know whether it was fair for his region to be excluded from the “rich tourist potential” of boating and angling tourists.97 Bord Fáilte took these concerns very seriously and emphasized new projects in Holland’s region in their 1973–76 tourism plan. Tourism development had to be national in scope, and yet the most economically challenged areas required disproportionate attention,98 especially when the area in question had little history of tourism.99 Of course, in the border area where tourist amenities spanned political boundaries, such projects could not be undertaken effectively without the cooperation of authorities on both sides.100

The situation remained largely unchanged throughout the 1970s: annual meetings, open discussion, and occasional joint publications continued, while

95. The British Travel Association (formerly British Travel and Holidays Association) was renamed the British Travel Authority in 1969.
periodically there were also glimmers of hope on the political front. On December 9, 1973, tourism was listed in the Sunningdale Agreement as one area in which the Council of Ireland—a body that was to be composed of representatives from both North and South—was to work for further cross-border development. It was hoped that the council would facilitate the “harmonizing” of policy in the two Irelands in order to “achieve the best utilisation of scarce skills, expertise, and resources; avoid . . . unnecessary duplication of effort; and . . . ensure complementary rather than competitive effort.” Significantly, cross-border links were designed to address the concerns of nationalists by providing them with official ties to the Republic—a concession that was too much for Unionists to take. On December 10, loyalist paramilitary organizations announced their opposition to the Council of Ireland, ensuring that there was little chance of its long-term success. On January 1, 1974 a new “Northern Executive” took office, but it collapsed just five months later following the United Workers’ Council strike and Brian Faulkner’s resignation. There had been no substantial progress on joint tourism development. Likewise, a North-West Tourism Co-operation Group was established in late 1979 to address development and promotional needs in that region, but little progress had been made by 1981. The next major set of North-South cooperative enterprises did not come until the 1990s.

After the IRA cease-fire took effect in August, 1994, the road was cleared for an increased effort to promote tourism in Northern Ireland, as well as for an expansion of North-South cooperation. In November of that year, authorities from both North and South announced that a £6-million cross-border marketing campaign would be launched in 1995 in the hope of attracting an additional 92,000 tourists. While the details were not immediately announced, the two tourist boards had agreed to collaborate on an “Ireland Vacations” television campaign in Britain, America, France, Germany, and Holland. As always, the campaign would include houses, gardens, literary tours, museums, castles, and heritage and cultural attractions. The cease-fire represented what Charlie

McCreevy, Dublin’s minister for tourism and trade, called an opportunity to “maximise the island’s greatest asset—the natural beauty and heritage.” McCreevy’s Northern counterpart agreed, predicting that “tourism has the capability and imagination necessary to seize the opportunities which now present themselves.” And opportunities there were: by October, 1994, the NITB had already experienced an increase of more than 90 percent in visitor inquiries, compared to the previous year.\(^{106}\)

In 1995, an even more significant program was announced that called for an integrated, island-wide “Tourism Brand for Ireland” program to be launched in 1997. It was anticipated that the plan would cost £5 million to start and some £20 to £30 million to sustain it annually thereafter. Bord Fáilte and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board would collaborate on the project.\(^{107}\) The Tourism Brand for Ireland project ultimately reached a level of cooperation that was celebrated by a special award granted by England’s *Observer* newspaper in 1996; the award recognized the two boards as “a model of cross-border cooperation, as they have combined their respective strengths to promote an industry that remains central to Ireland’s long-term economic development.”\(^{108}\)

Bord Fáilte was excited about the new program, envisioning it as “a critical change in focus for the marketing of the island of Ireland over the next five years.” The establishment of “Tourism Brand Ireland,” the program’s final title, represented the first time that “all of Irish tourism will be able to unify behind a single market initiative, a tourism brand which will contain the same central message, with variations and modifications which meet the needs and expectations of individual markets and cultures.” The program, it was argued, would provide a powerful tool, strengthening the island’s market position and allowing Ireland to attain its ultimate tourist potential.\(^{109}\)

On November 11, 1996, Tourism Brand Ireland was launched, eighteen months after the initial market research had commenced. In addition to an emotionally evocative video, the program included a “complete portfolio” of materials compiled to communicate the central message of the campaign—that Ireland was not so much a place as “an emotional experience.” In all cases, the term “Ireland” was used, always in English, without denoting North or South.\(^{110}\) It was as though past conflicts between North and South had never existed, as though sectarianism had been banished from memory. There were no complaints about nomenclature. No

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\(^{106}\) “£6m Boost for North-South Tourism Drive,” *Irish Travel Trade News* (December, 1994), 14.


concerns were expressed about the presentation of maps or the “provocative” use of color. Ireland was Ireland. Only one identity mattered.

This is not to say that the campaign lacked controversy. Less than one year into the Tourism Brand Ireland program, conflict erupted between authorities in Northern Ireland and Dr. Jim McDaid, the Republic’s minister of tourism, which briefly threatened to derail the effort. The disagreement surrounded the logo used to denote Tourism Brand Ireland materials; the logo showed two people embracing and exchanging a shamrock.111 After considerable debate, both tourism boards had agreed on the logo, which was to symbolize the newly unified Irish product.112 Then, in August, 1997, Dr. McDaid asked the board to abandon the new logo in favor of the shamrock because he felt that the new version resembled “a pair of dancing alligators.” The new logo looked compelling on film, McDaid argued, but it was “over-complex when presented on the flat, as in a newspaper advertisement.” Faced with this request, the Tourist Board promised to review the situation amid considerable political harping in the Dublin press.

Ordinarily, this might have been the end of another petty, if high-cost, soap opera custom-made to provide copy for Ireland’s daily papers. But the fact that Tourism Brand Ireland was a cooperative effort raised the stakes. Although McDaid informed his counterpart in Northern Ireland, Adam Ingram, that he was dissatisfied with the logo, he ignored Ingram’s reply that any change should be based on market research conducted and analyzed by both tourist boards. Word that McDaid had demanded a logo change reached Belfast through the press, causing Ingram to become enraged. The Northern minister immediately released a strongly worded statement condemning McDaid’s “unilateral action.” McDaid’s approach was hardly the right way to demonstrate “full partnership,” said the Northern politician. He added caustically, “The handling of the logo issue does not reassure me that this basic principle [of collaboration] is fully understood and shared,” and he demanded that the decision be reversed pending a review. The Department of Tourism denied that any unilateral action had occurred, and insisted that all decisions had been reached jointly, but the damage was done. In the North, the Alliance Party lashed out, decrying McDaid’s “failure to accept the necessities of North-South cooperation.” The nationalist Irish News agreed, arguing that his actions “undermined confidence in the Republic’s commitment to partnership” and had “destroyed a small but potent symbol of a new Ireland built on partnership.”113 Even the Irish Times

111. Steedman, “£3m Tourism.”
declared McDaid “a menace who seems to believe that his main job is to interfere at the Tourist Board.” Meanwhile, the two tourist boards launched an effort at damage control, insisting that no long-term harm had been caused and that the two bodies continued to work together smoothly.

Ultimately, the controversy caused no irreparable damage. Still, the symbolism that resulted was telling. While the NITB opted to continue using the new Tourism Brand Ireland logo, Bord Fáilte reverted to the shamrock. The campaign that was supposed to promote all of Ireland as a single product with a common brand identity was left with two logos. At government level, the South proved unwilling to embrace the notion of a common, border-blind identity, even if that identity was limited to a simple graphic design. For the moment there remained a great willingness on the part of business leaders to view Ireland as a marketable commodity free of contentious divisions—but at government level, such divisions had not yet been set completely aside.

Only in recent years have scholars recognized the extraordinary importance of tourism to modern nations. Tourism has implications for social, cultural, economic, and even political life. Even the Nazis understood this: they created an entire organization, *Kraft durch Freude*, that was designed to use tourism and other related tactics to attract workers to the National Socialists, to educate the German people about the benefits of the racial state, and to send a message to foreign governments about Germany’s growing aspirations. The right was not alone in recognizing the political significance of the tourism industry. For example, Léon Blum’s Popular Front government in France used tourism to help mitigate social antagonisms and to promote a government social welfare policy. Despite this growing recognition, the industry still has not attracted the attention it deserves.

Tourism has played an important and consistent role has been in perpetuating North-South cooperation. The recent creation of Tourism Ireland Ltd.—a jointly operated company—is significant, but it comes at the end of a long and consistent period of joint effort that began almost at Partition. As early as

1924, Irish tourism officials established model for cooperation, even when that cooperation did not reflect state policy. Although it is not possible to say definitively that Lemass had the North-South tourism model in mind when he proposed a revised formal relationship, the evidence suggests that Lemass was well aware of the ongoing tourism cooperation—to say nothing of the extraordinary growth undergone by the industry prior to his famous meeting with O’Neill in 1965. It was no anomaly that the tourist industry was at the top of the list of topics discussed by Lemass and O’Neill, or that tourism proved one of the most successful and permanent cooperative endeavors to have emerged from the meeting.

Tourism played another, less tangible, role as well. It served as a nexus for debate about the nature of identity in both Northern Ireland and the Republic. Even when a virtual cold war existed between the respective governments, the potential financial gain offered by tourism usually trumped political concerns and brought people together. Tourism developers had to wrestle with the tendency among tourists to define Ireland according to geography, not politics, while also acknowledging that the two states—and the national identities therein—were not homogeneous. Undoubtedly, tourism played a role in the negotiation of identities by providing an area in which the presentations of the two countries in terms of borders, political structures, and nomenclature were debated. At times the dialogue was difficult, at other times it modeled a successful alternative to often-frosty official relations. Either way, the tourist industry created ongoing dialogue.