

Ireland

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London S.W.1

*M. has seen
& approved.*

30 July 1981

Andrew

*← no informed,
30/7.*

Dear Michael.

PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE TO THE FOUR HORSEMEN

You asked for advice on the telegrams from HM Ambassador in Dublin reporting his conversation on 28 July with the Taoiseach, and those from HM Ambassador in Washington reporting the Taoiseach's message to the Four Horsemen.

The background is this. I understand the reference to the Taoiseach's reported views was included in the draft message on the instructions of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who was anxious to draw attention to the way in which recent action by the Government appeared to have met points made by the Taoiseach. The draft was sent to No 10 on Thursday evening, 23 July. At that time the reported statement had not been publicly or privately retracted. The reference in the draft accurately reflected the press reports, and the Taoiseach does not apparently dispute that it does.

On Friday, 24 July, HM Ambassador in Dublin reported his conversation that day with Professor Dooge. This telegram was received at 6.35pm. Professor Dooge said that he and his colleagues had been bothered by some inaccurate accounts in the press in the past few days about what the Irish Government thought, and that reporting in the Irish Press of that day was much better. Neither this account nor the piece of paper handed HM Ambassador referred specifically to the 'Irish Times' article on which the reference in the statement had been based. The telegram from HM Ambassador was not judged to necessitate

/ asking you

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10 Downing Street



asking you to amend the draft message, should it not already have been despatched. The Taoiseach's discussion on 28 July with HM Ambassador was wholly unexpected.

The Prime Minister may think that the Irish are being over-sensitive. The reports in the Irish Times were not denied in that paper nor, pace the Taoiseach, did Professor Dooge expressly tell the Ambassador that it should be ignored - he was much more vague. And the Irish themselves are not above reproach : we felt some justified irritation at the publicity they gave to Dr FitzGerald's approach to President Reagan about the hunger strike. But it is not in our interest to continue this exchange with the Taoiseach let alone to raise the temperature. In the Lord Privy Seal's view, our purpose should be to soothe the Taoiseach. The Lord Privy Seal believes therefore that HM Ambassador at Dublin should be instructed to explain what has happened and express regret that a difference between us should have arisen in consequence. I enclose a draft telegram for the Prime Minister's approval. It is intended to lower the temperature and remind the Irish Government of the need for cooperation if the men of violence are to be beaten.

As for the Friends of Ireland, to say nothing about this incident would risk undermining the force of the text of the Prime Minister's message to them; while to say too much would risk involving us in an unedifying exchange about the origins of the incident. The Lord Privy Seal believes that the right response would be for HM Ambassador in Washington to speak to the Four Horsemen, drawing on Mr Figg's instructions, and say that, in view of the Taoiseach's claim that part of her letter was misleading, the Prime Minister would not be sending a signed original. He would explain that she was not withdrawing her letter, and that the rest of it stood as delivered.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has agreed with the foregoing and the telegram includes a passage for Washington accordingly.

/I am



I am sending copies of this letter to Stephen Boys-Smith (NIO) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever
Stephen Gomersall.*

S J Gomersall
Private Secretary to the
Lord Privy Seal

File No.

Department RID

Drafted by
(Block Capitals)

Tel. Extn.

OUTWARD

TELEGRAM

<i>Security Classification</i> CONFIDENTIAL
<i>Precedence</i> IMMEDIATE
DESKBYZ

FOR
COMMS. DEPT.
USE

Despatched (Date)
(Time)Z

POSTBYZ

PREAMBLE

(Time of Origin) Z (G.M.T.)

(Security Class.) CONFIDENTIAL

(Codeword)

(Restrictive Prefix)
(Caveat/
Privacy marking)

(Deskby) Z

TO IMMEDIATE DUBLIN Tel. No. of
(precedence) (post)

AND TO (precedence/post) IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON

AND SAVING TO

REPEATED TO (for info) PRIORITY NIO BELFAST

SAVING TO (for info)

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[TEXT]

DUBLIN TELNOS 269, 270 and 271 : PRIME MINISTER'S REPLY
TO THE FRIENDS OF IRELAND

(Dublin)

1. It is regrettable that the Taoiseach should have chosen to react as emotionally as he has. His message to the Friends of Ireland was unhelpful. But it is clearly in our interest to lower the temperature. You should therefore seek an early opportunity to speak to the Irish Government in the terms of paragraph 2 below, drawing as necessary on paragraph 3.

2. HMG were concerned to hear that the Taoiseach regretted the reference to his views in the Prime Minister's message of 25 July to the Friends of Ireland. The Prime Minister was entirely unaware that she was in any way /misrepresenting

Copies to:-

misrepresenting his views and would regret it if any difference between the two governments should arise in consequence. HMG recognise that there are differences of appreciation between them and the Irish where the hunger strike is concerned but consider it important that our common opposition to terrorism should be recognised. They believe that the fullest trust, understanding and cooperation between the two governments is vital if we are to beat our common enemies, the men of violence.

3. HMG note that the Irish authorities consider that they should have known before the letter was delivered that the reference to the Taoiseach's views did not represent his position or that of his Government. The message was prepared on Thursday evening, 23 July. At that time the reported statement had not been publicly or privately retracted. Professor Dooge's subsequent remarks were not understood in London as referring to the statements reported separately verbatim in the Irish Times and attributed to the Irish Government's spokesman.

4. (Washington). In view of Dr FitzGerald's complaint the Prime Minister will not now be sending a signed original of the message. In conveying this to the Four Horsemen you should draw on paragraphs 2 and 3 above. You should also leave them in no doubt that we are not withdrawing the message, and that the rest of it stands as delivered.

Ans