

From: John Biggs-Davison, M.P.

Dulan's letter 129
12/11/81
cc.
IG



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

19th May 1981

Dear Prime Minister

The nation has been commendably steady in the face of "Troops Out" agitation. This is in measure due to your courageous lead.

Yet the television spectacle of troops under petrol bomb attack has added to widespread impatience at continuing terrorism which, though statistically less, depresses morale. It also detains precious Armed Forces.

Since terrorism is an extension of political propaganda, lives on publicity and languishes without it, the role of the media needs urgent examination. It is ironic that Dublin forbids the media appearances of members of proscribed organisations while we do not.

The other factor which encourages terrorism to continue is the hope of blasting, or boring, Government into accepting its demands.

The IRA nourishes such a hope because of public uncertainty about the purport of the Dublin talks and about HMG's intentions for the future governance of Northern Ireland.

The apparent preference of Ministers for devolved government over full integration with Great Britain causes Nationalists to hope, and Unionists to fear, that HMG wants to hold the door open to eventual merger or confederation with the Republic.

The hope and the fear persist despite Humphrey Atkins's welcome intention of improving direct rule.

Both can be removed by the clear adoption, and announcement, of policy for Ulster on the lines set out on the Annex to this letter. They hold good whatever the result of the District Council elections. I am sending Humphrey a copy of both this letter and Annex.

Yours etc,
John

The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.

ULSTER POLICY

In accordance with the will of the overwhelming majority of its people, not all of one faith, as declared by democratic vote in elections and in the Border Poll of 1973, the Union of Northern Ireland with Great Britain will be upheld.

We rejoice at the fidelity of our fellow citizens to the United Kingdom: it stood us in good stead in world war.

We honour the courage and patience of the Northern Ireland people in their suffering; and we look to the Republic of Ireland for ever closer co-operation in the common struggle against terrorism which afflicts South as well as North.

Since the main parties in the province disagree on a form of devolved government but direct rule appears to be the system that divides them least, Northern Ireland will be governed, as Wales and Scotland are governed, with its own structure of local government, an administration sensitive to its ways and just representation in both Houses of Parliament.

The enlargement of representation in the House of Commons is in train.

It is inconceivable that Parliament would ever again be indifferent to Ulster grievances, as it was under the convention of non-interference arising from the existence of a regional Parliament at Stormont.

Parliament is the surest protector of the rights of all.

We respect the culture and traditions of those who legitimately and democratically aspire to a United Ireland.

We trust that it will be of some satisfaction to them that Her Majesty's Government intends to build on the "unique relationship" between the two sovereign states within them so that the Border, marking the frontier between two fellow-members of the European Community may, to adapt words of Kevin O'Higgins, be abolished in our hearts.

The exercise by Northern Ireland of the right of self-determination, implicitly acknowledged by a number of Southern statesmen, precludes a United Ireland in the terms of the Irish Constitution.*

But, with mutual respect for national sovereignty and the enriching variety of our traditions, we can further the unity of these Islands within the larger unity of Europe.

* The deletion of Article 2 thereof would give confidence to the Unionist people and allay their mistrust of their Nationalist neighbours and of the South. It is to be hoped that this is being discussed with Dublin.