

SECRET

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MOST CONFIDENTIAL RECORD
TO
CC(84) 9th Conclusions
Thursday 8 March 1984

NORTHERN
IRELAND

THE PRIME MINISTER said that the Secretary of the Cabinet had now had an informal, secret and exploratory discussion with the Secretary of the Irish Government in the terms authorised by the Cabinet on 16 February. It had been apparent that the Taoiseach, Dr Fitzgerald, was heavily preoccupied with bringing the "Forum for a New Ireland" to a successful conclusion; and that, partly in consequence of that preoccupation, the Irish side had been taken somewhat by surprise by the British approach. They welcomed a number of elements in it, but had serious difficulty with the idea of a border strip which would incorporate territory on the Republic's side of the border. It appeared that although the Taoiseach stood by the "basic equation" which the Irish side had adumbrated earlier - namely, that he was looking for arrangements which would associate the Republic with law enforcement in Northern Ireland in return for recognition by the Republic that Northern Ireland would remain part of the United Kingdom for the foreseeable future - he still had no clear ideas of his own on how to give it practical effect. It seemed to be the Irish wish to keep the British side in play while they did their own homework; and it would probably be necessary to await publication of the Forum's report before it would be possible to get a clearer picture of the Irish Government's thinking.

The Cabinet -

Took note.

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