



MOST CONFIDENTIAL RECORD
TO
CC(84) 38th Conclusions

Thursday 22 November 1984

ANGLO-IRISH
SUMMIT

THE PRIME MINISTER said that she had held talks with the Taoiseach, Dr FitzGerald, at Chequers on 18 and 19 November. This was the second meeting of the Anglo-Irish Inter-governmental Council to be held at the Summit level. On Northern Ireland, the Taoiseach had expected too much from the discussions and had rejected the offer of a more modest outcome. Dr FitzGerald had set his heart on securing a package which would be seen as amounting to the exercise in Northern Ireland of joint authority by the British and Irish Governments, in return for the abandonment of the Irish territorial claim to Northern Ireland by means of constitutional amendment. There had been three main areas of discussion. Firstly, on security, the Irish had been offered a Joint Security Commission, comprising the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Irish Minister of Justice and the Chief Police Officers from both sides of the border, which would provide a forum in which the nationalists could raise any matters of concern to them in the security field. The nationalists in the North would have an advocate on the Commission, in the person of the Irish Minister. The Commission would have only an advisory role, but its creation would nevertheless represent a major step forward in Anglo-Irish co-operation. The Taoiseach had been unable to accept this proposition since in his view a Joint Security Commission would be seen in the South as simply a device by which the United Kingdom was enlisting Irish help in maintaining security in the North. The second main area covered by the discussions had been that of the political framework in Northern Ireland. On this, the Taoiseach had repeatedly reverted to the subject of power-sharing, which was anathema to the Unionists. The Prime Minister said that she had pointed out that exclusion from the exercise of power was a fate shared by all minorities when political parties were based on religion or race. The British Government could not impose a political framework on the parties in Northern Ireland: progress was likely to result only from talks, freely entered into, between those parties. It would be up to the Irish Government to press the nationalists to engage in such discussions, while the British Government could exert similar pressure on the Unionist parties. Talks of this nature could take place under the aegis of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and early discussions to this end were envisaged. The third area of discussion concerned the possibility of co-operation in the administration of criminal law in Northern Ireland and the Republic and the question whether further consideration should be given to the creation of mixed courts over which judges from both sides of the border might preside. The Taoiseach's unwillingness to settle, for the time being, for progress towards the creation of a Joint Security Commission had prevented the meeting as a whole from producing a positive outcome.



The Taoiseach had spoken fairly and constructively at his press conference following the Summit meeting. Following his return to Dublin, however, he had faced hostile press comment and, at a meeting with his backbenchers, had allowed himself to make unhelpful remarks which had, for the time being, soured the atmosphere of Anglo-Irish relations.

In a brief discussion, it was noted that, in the immediate aftermath of the Chequers meeting, it had seemed possible that further movement towards agreement on the creation of a Joint Security Commission would be feasible and that it might even still be possible, over a longer period, to move towards a situation in which the Irish side would be able to consider a referendum on constitutional amendment. Following Dr FitzGerald's outburst in Dublin, however, the outlook was clearly less promising. The Taoiseach's intemperate reaction to his political difficulties had been echoed by leading members of the Social Democrat and Labour Party (SDLP) in Belfast. A period of calm was now required. It would be important to impress on the Unionists that they held a position of considerable tactical strength and should therefore allow themselves to demonstrate, in private discussions with the SDLP, that they recognised the need to alleviate the concerns of the nationalist minority.

The Cabinet -

Took note.

Cabinet Office

26 November 1984