



*John R. J.  
Ireland*

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

22 March 1983

*Dear John,*

Prime Minister's Meeting with Dr. FitzGerald

I enclose the record of the Prime Minister's informal talk with the Taoiseach in the margins of the European Council in Brussels this morning.

I am copying the record and enclosure to John Lyon (Northern Ireland Office), Tony Rawsthorne (Home Office), Henry Steel (Law Officers' Department) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office). I should be grateful if you and they would ensure that the contents of the record, which should not be distributed beyond private offices, are closely protected.

*You see  
John Holmes.*

John Holmes Esq  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

*V/B*

SUBJECT  
cc Martin

Ireland

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE  
TAOISEACH, DR GARRET FITZGERALD, AT THE CHARLEMAGNE BUILDING  
IN BRUSSELS AT 0830 ON TUESDAY 22 MARCH

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Present:

Prime Minister	Dr Garret FitzGerald
Sir Robert Armstrong	Mr Dermot Nally
Mr. A.J. Coles	

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Dr FitzGerald said that he was glad that he was in contact with the Prime Minister and he hoped it would be possible to strengthen contact in the future.

First, he wished to raise a number of security issues. He had just heard about the case of two Irish terrorists in Paris who were considered to be a threat to Her Majesty's Ambassador in Paris and who were also wanted for murder in Ireland. There was no extradition treaty with France and the FCO had suggested that there should be talks on how to proceed. A member of the Irish Embassy would be calling at the FCO today to discuss this matter. He himself proposed to speak to the French Foreign Minister. He was not certain that there was enough evidence to prosecute the terrorists but if the French agreed to deport them, the Irish Government would do its best.

/The Prime Minister

The Prime Minister said that this was an important matter, both for the reasons given by Dr FitzGerald and because of French attitudes towards terrorism.

Dr. FitzGerald recalled the recent case in the Irish Supreme Court which had had the successful outcome of the extradition of an IRA murderer to Northern Ireland. Although the Court's judgment was rather obscure he wished to build upon it. The Irish Attorney General had recently had talks with Sir Michael Havers on this matter. They had selected a case (the murder of Sir Norman Strong and his son) which had the potential for building on the previous case. If there were difficulties in taking up this matter in the Supreme Court, he was perfectly prepared to use the normal procedures.

Another complex case concerned the four members of the RUC who had become involved in a brawl at a dance hall in the Republic. It appeared that this episode may not have been so innocent as it had been portrayed. The Irish DPP had prepared charges. The RUC men in question were to be extradited to Irish jurisdiction. This had provoked complaints from some of the Unionists. If we preferred to proceed under the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act, the Irish Government would have no objection.

/In general

In general he was anxious to help in the security field. The Prime Minister expressed gratitude and said we were examining the specific matters which the Taoiseach had raised.

Dr FitzGerald said that he wanted to reopen the Anglo-Irish relationship which had been developing earlier and to proceed at whatever pace and in whatever way the Prime Minister found possible. He suggested that official level contacts should be reactivated without publicity. The Prime Minister said that it was necessary to proceed slowly. We could co-operate quite extensively in the security field because everybody understood the importance of this. But Dr FitzGerald's proposal for a forum had immediately raised Unionists' fears and created a difficult atmosphere (though she understood why he had made the proposal). We could establish one or two private contacts but it was important to move slowly.

Dr FitzGerald said that the aim of re-establishing contact should be to lay a foundation for the future relationship. The Prime Minister said that she regarded it more as a matter of keeping in touch.

Dr FitzGerald said that one motive for his proposed forum was to help the SDLP. The Prime Minister said that Mr Concannon had recently explained to her the Taoiseach's pre-occupation with this aspect. Dr FitzGerald said that he had tried to present the proposal in the most helpful way possible. He was very worried. Younger people in Northern Ireland were becoming either apolitical or supporters of

Sinn Fein. He was very anxious to stop this process. But there was another reason for the forum. People in Northern Ireland had exaggerated ideas about the aspirations of the South. If the forum was used to present models for the future, Unionist fears might be reduced. In 1979 his party had put forward a policy document on confederation. The reaction had been by no means as hostile as might have been expected.

The Prime Minister said that if the idea of a forum was pursued at the present time, this would be very dangerous to the Unionist case. The Unionists would refuse to take part because the idea aroused all the Sunningdale ghosts. It was not a matter for her but for the Northern Ireland Assembly. However, it would be a mistake to press ahead quickly.

Dr FitzGerald said that he had expected hostile reactions but he hoped to use the forum to allay fears.

The Prime Minister said that the last thing she wanted was that Sinn Fein should get more support. But the SDLP was anti-Unionist. Dr FitzGerald said that they were also anti-IRA. Anything that could be done to strengthen the SDLP against Sinn Fein would be helpful.

The Prime Minister asked for Dr FitzGerald's assessment of the likely results in the 17 Northern Ireland seats in the next General Election. She presumed the Unionists would

get 12 seats. Dr FitzGerald said that he found it very difficult to assess but that he hoped that the SDLP would win at least 3 seats and that Sinn Fein would not win more than 2. He did not think that Mr. Enoch Powell was entirely safe. He hoped that Northern Ireland would not become an issue in our election campaign. The Prime Minister said that she would not make it an issue. She would stick by past undertakings but recent Labour Party statements cast doubt on whether a bipartisan policy could be maintained. Dr FitzGerald said that he hoped we would not give prominence to the local government aspect, given the continued discrimination at that level.

As regards other developments, he wondered whether progress could not be made with the "Encounter" organisation which had been referred to in the joint studies. The Prime Minister said that she would like to consider this. It would be a better approach than any more formal grouping. We should need to consider where meetings would be held. Sir Robert Armstrong said that this matter had not yet been discussed. He recalled that there was to be a council of six people on each side which would include a Junior Minister. The Prime Minister said that she did not think it would be useful to have ministerial members. As regards venue, we must avoid places where extensive security would be necessary. But the "Encounter" route was perhaps the most promising one to pursue. Officials should begin to discuss this but the resumption of contacts, other than

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in the security field, should be undertaken very slowly. With the prospect of an election campaign at some point in the future we had to be extremely careful. Dr FitzGerald said that he understood this but he hoped that after the election it would be possible to revive the old basis for the relationship.

It was then agreed that the following statement would be issued to the press:-

"The Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP, had a meeting today with the Taoiseach, Dr Garret FitzGerald TD. Both were attending the European Council in Brussels. The talks lasted about 45 minutes. They were informal and introductory in character, and covered a number of matters of mutual concern and common interest. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach expect to meet again at the next European Council."

The discussion ended at 0912.

A.S.C.

22 March 1983