

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



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Euro RSI: Brussels Council Meeting March 82
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26 March 1982

Dear John,

MEETING WITH MR HAUGHEY

... In the light of your letter earlier today I enclose briefing for the Prime Minister's use when she meets Mr Haughey in Brussels next week. It focuses on the points Mr Haughey will have in mind or which should be made to him, and does not of course attempt to give full summary of the scheme. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has not been able to see it.

Copies of this letter and its enclosure go to Francis Richards (FCO) and David Wright (Cabinet Office)

Francis
Steph

S W BOYS SMITH

CONFIDENTIAL

MEETING WITH MR HAUGHEY IN THE MARGINS OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL:

29/30 MARCH 1982

NORTHERN IRELAND

POINTS TO MAKE

1. HMG has yet to reach decisions on Mr Prior's proposals but they involve very substantial safeguards for the minority.
2. Devolution of powers would require the consent of Parliament which would not be forthcoming unless arrangements were acceptable to both sides of the community.
3. It is difficult to see how Northern Ireland could be properly represented in an Anglo-Irish inter-parliamentary body unless there were an elected regional Assembly - Mr Haughey has publicly suggested either special elections or appointment of Northern Ireland representatives by Mr Prior, both are impracticable.
4. Direct rule is unsatisfactory. If devolution proves impossible we may have to consider integration or a system of regional councils, or more powers to local government.
5. The initiative has many hurdles to surmount from Unionist as well as nationalist opinion. If it is seen to founder on account of unwillingness to compromise by the minority, British opinion could well draw the conclusion that the majority deserve more sympathy, support and freedom of action.

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BACKGROUND

Mr Haughey has sought the meeting. He knows that decisions on Mr Prior's proposals (details in the paper considered by OD on 25 March) are imminent. In a joint statement with the SDLP on 22 March he said "the proposals as they were emerging were unworkable" and "deficient in that they concentrated on the details of an administration for Northern Ireland without due regard for the broader dimensions of the problem". He may want to press for a stronger Irish dimension, particularly through the setting up of an inter-parliamentary body, but he has in fact shown little inclination to support the concept of a devolved government for Northern Ireland. His recent speeches, including at the White House on 17 March, have sought to put pressure on HMG to express support for Irish unity.

2. One cannot hope to persuade Mr Haughey to support Mr Prior's proposals. But he could be urged to adopt a less negative approach. It is in the interests of both sides of the community in Northern Ireland and Anglo-Irish relations to promote political development there.

3. Mr Prior has offered to see the new Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs in London on Wednesday to explain the proposals at more length than is feasible in a meeting in the margin of the Council.

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