

MR COLES

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IRISH BILATERAL

It might be useful if I gave you my thoughts on media arrangements for the above, on the assumption it is at Chequers.

The fact that it is at Chequers makes handling the media difficult and we ought to consider how that is to be coped with.

First, photographs. This causes no difficulty. We can organise a restricted pool for a photo on the doorstep or in the grounds. But that would have to be the extent of any media facilities at Chequers.

Second, pre-Summit briefing. There has already been publicity, notably in the Guardian, about the forthcoming Summit and the timing. All our experience shows that dates of Summits leak in Dublin. We need therefore to decide whether to brief in advance of the occasion. There is presumably less security concern about a bilateral in London. Subject to security considerations, there is in my view advantage in preparing the way - eg. by briefing on the Friday and thereby influencing presentation.

Third, briefing during the bilateral. This in turn depends on whether there is to be a press conference (which would have to be at RAF Halton). So to deal first with a press conference.

Our experience of these bilaterals shows that while secrecy does not pay, neither necessarily does a reasonable openness. In short, the Irish play it for what they want out of it.

But because they do that my advice would be:

- no press conference, singly or joint;
- no radio or tv interviews afterwards;
- a communiqué which sets out conclusions in careful terms, to be supplemented only by factual elaboration by spokesmen.

If this is agreed, we could brief to an agreed line, at lunchtime, prior to the issue of a communiqué later in the day.

All this does not mean that we shall entirely control presentation, or allay suspicions, because neither is possible in the Irish context. What it does mean, if the Irish can be tied down to this, is that we only say on-the-record to the press what we want to say.

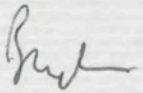
If the Irish do not fall in with this, we need to consider whether our approach should change.

Do we wish to appear to be less forthcoming? Are we prepared to let the Irish make the running?

If the Irish do fall in with the idea of a communiqué and tight briefing how do we respond to the question:

"Why no press conference/interviews with an Irish bilateral when they are a familiar (if not invariable) part of the bilateral scene in Europe?"

You may think we ought to discuss with the Prime Minister.



B. INGHAM

25 October 1983

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References.....*hope*.....*this*.....*is*.....*useful*

Patrol.

Mr Barrie

cc: Mr Colvin, Cabinet Office
Mr Angel, NIO(L)
Mr Tatham, DUBLIN
Mr Reeve, NIO(B)

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS

1. I had lunch today, at his request, with Michael Wills, one of the producers of ITV's Sunday programme 'Weekend World'. He had asked for an unattributable background briefing in anticipation of the Anglo-Irish Summit. Before agreeing to see Mr Wills, in view of Cabinet Office responsibilities, I confirmed with Mr Goodall that he saw no objection to RID taking this on; and confirmed with News Department that ~~Wills~~ was considered trustworthy.
2. Mr Wills explained that he hoped that a programme on Anglo-Irish relations would be broadcast on 6 November to set the scene for subsequent reporting of the Summit on 7 November. I commented that no date had been announced, and declined to confirm or deny the 7th.
3. Mr Wills started by asking me what I saw as the purpose of the Summit. I said that I thought it was about normalisation of relations, recalled at some length the historical background to the coolness which for so long marked relations between governments in Dublin and London and contrasted it with the closeness of relations between peoples in the two countries. I made much also of the extent to which our problems arose because of the relative lack of interest in and knowledge of the Republic in Great Britain and the intense interest in the Republic in British affairs and in the relationship between the two countries. I explained that after the coolness of the last two years both governments wished to restore relations, having in mind what was natural between two equal partners in the European Community, because relations between the communities in Northern Ireland could hardly improve if relations between Dublin and London were strained. I said that the plat de consistance at the Summit was likely to be a review of activity in the last two years under the aegis of the AIIC and consideration of the areas in which more could be done in future, explaining that we saw one of the aims of the AIIC as being the generation of more frequent and easier contacts between Ministers and officials of the two countries, contacts which would with time increase understanding between them and make for an easier and more productive relationship. I drew attention to the value, for Franco-German relations of the frequent meetings which they had formally agreed should take place.
4. Mr Wills said that he wondered whether it would not be possible to make a link between the Summit and progress in Northern Ireland. I said that I did not think that this was what the Summit would be about. For his part, Dr FitzGerald would have nothing concrete to propose until the Forum had reported and he would hardly expect the

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Prime Minister to want to talk about courses of action which were entirely hypothetical.

5. Mr Wills then started to come clean and said that he and his team had had the impression from "people like Mary Holland" but also "other well-informed sources" that there was a lot going on as a result of the work of the Forum. The Irish were becoming more realistic and concerned at the threat to the stability of the Republic arising from the troubles in the North and were looking very hard at new ideas. One of the ideas which seemed to be in the air was an Irish contribution to security in the North; another was joint sovereignty; and of course links were made between the two.

6. I said that I had seen ideas of this sort bruted about in various articles in the press. As I had said, I did not think that this was what the Summit was about. Such ideas as I had seen set out seemed pretty half-baked. Mr Wills pressed me on the question of joint sovereignty and implied that his programme might go into this as a possible approach. I said that it seemed to me that none of the accounts I had seen advocating joint sovereignty had really faced up to the facts. Joint sovereignty if it meant anything meant joint control. How would that be operated? And it would involve a substantial change in the status of the Province. The position in law was well-known: there can be no change in the constitutional position in Northern Ireland without the consent of a majority of the people of the Province. Did those who advocated joint sovereignty suppose that it could be imposed without the consent of a majority in the Province? Or did they imagine that that consent could be obtained in some way? It was unrealistic to believe that either of these was politically possible. Would there not be a risk of substituting terrorism stemming from the majority community for terrorism stemming from the minority?

7. Other points I made included pointing out that Mr Prior was committed, and rightly committed, to the principle that there should be no secret deals but also that the unionists could not be allowed to dictate HMG's policies towards Anglo-Irish relations as long as they respected the principle embodied in the law.

8. We shall have to give thought to the line to take if we are pressed on similar lines by other journalists. The best occasion to discuss it might be Mr Goodall's meeting on Friday, if he agrees.

Patrick Eyers

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