

PS  
PS/LADY YOUNG  
PS/MR. RENTON

PS/S. O'S  
PS/MR R. ANDREW  
OAB 1/56

PS/PCS

MR. BERNAN

~~MR. J. ...~~

MR. BURNS

MR. JENNINS

J. LYON  
~~MR. BOYD ...~~

XIO

D/ED

SIR B. ARMSTRONG

CABINET

D/PUSD (2)

DIO

D/INFO D

D/NEWS D

R. ES. CLONK

SS/No 10 DOWNING STREET (3)

GRS 520  
CONFIDENTIAL  
DESKBY 121800Z  
FM DUBLIN 121655Z NOV 84  
TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 630 OF 12 NOVEMBER 1984

7/57/12

MB

YOUR TELNO 305: ANGLO-IRISH SUMMIT

1. THE PRESENT SUMMIT OCCUPIES A VITAL PLACE IN DR FITZGERALD'S PRIORITIES. WHILST FAILURE WOULD NOT BRING DOWN HIS GOVERNMENT, IT COULD SERIOUSLY DAMAGE HIS CREDIBILITY, SINCE HE IS KNOWN TO BE PERSONALLY CONCERNED OVER POLICY TOWARDS NORTHERN IRELAND.
2. SINCE HIS RETURN TO OFFICE IN DECEMBER 1982, DR FITZGERALD HAS DEVOTED A GREAT DEAL OF TIME TO NORTHERN IRELAND. FROM MARCH 1983 TO MAY 1984, HE WAS HEAVILY INVOLVED IN THE NEW IRELAND FORUM, WHICH ORIGINATED IN AN SDLP MANIFESTO PROPOSAL BUT WAS TAKEN UP BY DR FITZGERALD TO HELP THE SDLP TO BEAT OFF SINN FEIN'S CHALLENGE AND TO TRY AND FOSTER A GREATER REALISM IN THE SOUTH ABOUT THE NORTH. IN THE SHORT TERM, THE FORUM HAS BEEN MORE SUCCESSFUL IN MEETING THE FORMER THAN THE LATTER AIM, BUT BOTH REMAIN CENTRAL PLANKS OF DR FITZGERALD'S POLICY ON NORTHERN IRELAND. WITH ITS AGREED LISTS OF "REALITIES" AND "REQUIREMENTS", THE FORUM REPORT PROVIDES HIM WITH THE BEST BASIS HE CAN HOPE FOR IN PURSUING THESE OBJECTIVES, AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS THEREFORE BEEN DETERMINED NOT TO ALLOW IT TO BE SUBMERGED IN THE WAKE OF MR HAUCHEY'S EARLY DISAVOWAL OF TWO OF ITS PROPOSED OPTIONS AND OUR OWN INITIAL MUTED RESPONSE.
3. IN HIS SPEECH TO THE FINE GAEL ARD FHEIS (PARTY CONFERENCE) IN OCTOBER, DR FITZGERALD SAID THAT IT WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAT THE CONSIDERED BRITISH RESPONSE SHOULD BE RIGHT THAN THAT IT SHOULD APPEAR WITHIN A GIVEN TIME SPAN. BUT IT WILL NEVERTHELESS BE A MAJOR IRISH OBJECTIVE TO SHOW THAT HMG IS TAKING THE ISSUES RAISED IN THE REPORT SERIOUSLY AND IS NOT JUST HOPING TO AVOID THEM.
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OF THE MINORITY COMMUNITY IN THE NORTH IS SEEN HERE AS FIRST PRIORITY. THE SORT OF THINGS THE IRISH HAVE IN MIND RANGE FROM ALLOWING THE MINORITY GREATER FREEDOM TO EXPRESS THEIR IDENTITY (USE OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE ON THE BBC, ON ROAD SIGNS, OR IN SCHOOLS, AND REPEAL OF THE FLAGS AND EMBLEMS ACT) TO THE NEED AS THEY SEE IT FOR A MAJOR INITIATIVE TO CREATE NEW INSTITUTIONS IN WHICH CONSTITUTIONAL NATIONALISTS WOULD FEEL ABLE TO TAKE PART. SUCH INSTITUTIONS COULD NOT OFFER THE SDLP LESS THAN SUNNINGDALE. DR FITZGERALD IS HOPING TO SECURE A COMMITMENT TO THEM.

5. FOR A PERIOD IN THE SUMMER, IT SEEMED AS THOUGH THE IRISH GOVERNMENT WAS RAISING EXPECTATIONS OVER-HIGH, POSSIBLY AS A MEANS OF PUTTING PRESSURE ON HMG. BUT MORE RECENTLY A DEGREE OF CAUTION HAS BEEN DISCERNIBLE, AT LEAST IN THE TAOISEACH'S PRONOUNCEMENTS. THE GENUINE ANGER FELT BY THE VAST MAJORITY OF IRISH PEOPLE AT THE OUTRAGE IN BRIGHTON HAD A FURTHER SOBERING EFFECT ON PUBLIC OPINION.

6. DR FITZGERALD CANNOT AFFORD TO COME AWAY FROM THE SUMMIT EMPTY HANDED. HE HAS INVESTED SO MUCH OF HIS TIME AND PERSONAL EFFORT IN AN ATTEMPT TO FIND A WAY FORWARD ON NORTHERN IRELAND WHICH COULD OFFER SOME ESCAPE FROM THE STERILE AND DANGEROUS CONFRONTATION OF THE LAST 15 YEARS THAT FAILURE WOULD EXPOSE HIS GOVERNMENT, AND HIS LEADERSHIP, TO ACCUSATIONS OF HAVING FORFEITED TRADITIONAL IRISH ASPIRATIONS WITHOUT ANY CONCOMITANT GAINS.

7. IN THIS CONTEXT WE SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT, WHILST BOTH THE COALITION GOVERNMENT AND DR FITZGERALD'S LEADERSHIP LOOK SECURE ENOUGH FOR THE TIME BEING, HIS PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY IS ONLY SIX, THE OPINION POLLS ARE RUNNING HEAVILY AGAINST BOTH COALITION PARTIES AND FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER RATE MR HAUGHEY A BETTER LEADER THAN THE TAOISEACH. MOREOVER (AND NOT UNRELATED TO HIS POLICY ON NORTHERN IRELAND), DR FITZGERALD WILL SOON HAVE TO CONFRONT THE QUESTION WHETHER OR NOT TO ATTEMPT A REFERENDUM ON DIVORCE, STILL A HIGHLY DIVISIVE SUBJECT IN IRELAND. DESPITE SOME INDICATIONS OF EMERGENT CROSS-PARTY CONSENSUS, HE CANNOT RELY ON FIANNA FAIL TO HELP.

NOR ARE THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS LIKELY TO GET ANY EASIER. UNLESS THE WORLD ECONOMY PERFORMS MUCH BETTER THAN MOST COMMENTATORS SEEM TO EXPECT, IT MUST AT BEST BE QUESTIONABLE WHETHER THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC PLAN CAN PRODUCE THE RESULTS PROMISED OVER ITS THREE YEAR SPAN.

8. THUS DR FITZGERALD IS IN NO POSITION TO OFFER ANY UNILATERAL CONCESSIONS (SUCH AS REMOVAL OF ARTICLES 2 AND 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION) WHICH, ONE MIGHT ARGUE, WOULD CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE MORE CONDUCTIVE TO A WIDER SETTLEMENT. DR FITZGERALD WILL BE LOOKING FOR BALANCE SOLUTIONS. THE DEGREE TO WHICH WE CAN ACCOMODATE THE "IRISH DIMENSION" WILL BE THE PRINCIPAL QUESTION IN IRISH MINDS AT THE SUMMIT.

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*That is not  
my problem.*