

SUBJECT
cc. Master Set.

SECRET

40

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Anglo-Irish Summit : First Evening

The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach had a private conversation after dinner on 18 November. The Prime Minister subsequently gave other members of the delegation a brief account of it.

The Taoiseach said that he had spent much of his political life trying to demonstrate that expectations of Irish reunification were wholly unrealistic. Recent opinion polls in the Republic were evidence that he had advanced a long way towards this goal. They showed that a majority of people in the Republic were ready to see Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution modified provided that something was done at the same time to restore nationalist confidence in the North. The question was what and how.

The Prime Minister pressed the Taoiseach on why he thought that the minority in the North were alienated. She could understand that they had, in the past, had good reason to be so. But steps had been taken to eliminate discrimination in all the important aspects of their lives, such as education and housing. They enjoyed a significantly better standard of living than their counterparts in the Republic (the Taoiseach acknowledged this). What was it that still made them feel unfairly treated?

The Taoiseach said that there were a number of irritants such as frisking of Catholic youths by the UDR. But the basic problem was the feeling that the minority would never have any chance of being in government or having a say in decisions. They felt excluded by the system. The Prime Minister pointed out that this was not uncommon internationally. The Ndebele in Zimbabwe had no prospect of holding power, nor did Muslims in India or Chinese in Malaya. It was inevitable when political parties were based on confessional or racial groups. The way for such groups

SECRET

SECRET

- 2 -

to exercise power had to be to join more widely based parties.

In further pressing his point, the Taoiseach kept coming back to power-sharing in the North as the only way to give the republican minority confidence and some influence over their future. He did not dwell upon institutionalised consultation. The Prime Minister recalled the enormous efforts made in the past to achieve a form of government acceptable to both sides in the North and the insurmountable obstacles encountered.

19 November 1984

SECRET