



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

22 November 1984

Prime Minister

CDP
22/xi

Dear Charles,

Anglo/Irish Summit: 18-19 November 1984

Dublin Press Reaction

In view of the fuss in Dublin following Dr FitzGerald's return from the Chequers Summit, you may wish to have the following summary of the reaction of the Dublin dailies on 20 and 21 November.

Press reactions on the morning after the Summit (20 November), with the notable exception of the "Irish Independent", took Mr Haughey's cue to declare the Summit a failure and to blame the Prime Minister (see Dublin telno 675 attached).

Press coverage on the following day (21 November) centred on Mr Haughey's scathing attack on the Taoiseach in the Dail the evening before. In his statement to the Dail the Taoiseach had acknowledged that important differences remained to be overcome but he had argued that it was possible to build something on the principles shared by the two Governments in the areas of accommodating both identities and providing a system of security acceptable to both nationalists and Unionists. Mr Haughey's response has been prominently reported: he accused Dr FitzGerald of "abject capitulation to a new British intransigence and a craven desertion of the principles of the Forum Report" and said that the Prime Minister had brutally rejected the Forum's principles and had "trampled nationalist aspirations into the ground". He accused the Taoiseach of incompetence, misjudgment, ineffectiveness and of pathetic behaviour. He pledged himself "to continue to fight at home and abroad for the only solution that would bring lasting peace and justice to this island of ours".

In commenting on the exchange the "Irish Independent" (which is generally supportive of the Coalition Government) said that Mr Haughey's invective had floored a "far too gentle Taoiseach". Mr Haughey had convincingly "hammered home the image of a muddled, incoherent leader incapable of standing up to Mrs Thatcher". The same paper noted that when he began his statement the Taoiseach had the Ministerial

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support of only Mr Spring and Ruairi Quinn. The 'Irish Press' (generally pro-Fianna Fail) reported that there was considerable disillusion on the Government side of the House, particularly at Dr FitzGerald's "lacklustre performance" at his post-Summit press conference and the "gloss" he had placed on the meeting with the Prime Minister. The paper claimed that there was embarrassment at the Prime Minister's dismissal of the word "alienation" and unease at her unwillingness to endorse Mr Barry's claim that Britain has recognised the right of the Irish Government to speak for the nationalists in the North. Above all, it reports, there seems to be anger and dismay over the Prime Minister's outright rejection of the three Forum models.

The 'Irish Times' reported the emergency debate the previous day in the Northern Ireland Assembly giving prominence to DUP Deputy leader Peter Robinson's remark that the proposals of the new Ireland Forum are "now in a burial plot somewhere near Chequers".

On the prospects for future inter-governmental talks the 'Irish Times' carried a report claiming that it had "learned" that the division at the Summit had centred on whether or not the Republic would have any "executive role" in Northern Ireland affairs and that "if no substantial progress is made on the division which emerged at the Summit, the talks will be broken off, most likely at the next Summit planned for February". British refusal to grant anything more than a consultative role, it went on to say, makes a breakdown more probable. It claimed that Irish Government sources had said that "responsibility without power would be unacceptable".

Yours ever,

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 675 OF 20 NOVEMBER 1984

INFO IMMEDIATE NIO (BELFAST) AND NIO (LONDON)

AND TO BIS NY + WASHINGTON.

ANGLO-IRISH SUMMIT: IMMEDIATE REACTIONS

1. THE FIANNA FAIL LEADER, MR HAUGHEY, WAS PREDICTABLY CRITICAL OF THE SUMMIT'S OUTCOME, EXPRESSING DISAPPOINTMENT THAT "NOTHING OF SUBSTANCE" HAD EMERGED AND THAT THERE WAS "NO AGREEMENT ON ANY POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THE FORUM REPORT". HE SAID THAT "A UNIONIST VETO OVER ANY KIND OF POLITICAL PROGRESS HAS BEEN AFFIRMED BY THE PRIME MINISTER IN A NEW AND WIDELY EXTENDED FORM WHICH PRECLUDES ANY POSSIBLE PROGRESS IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE".

2. EDITORIAL COMMENT IS MIXED. TODAY'S IRISH TIMES AND IRISH PRESS EXPRESS STRONG DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE APPARENT OUTCOME OF THE TALKS, WHILE THE IRISH INDEPENDENT TAKES A MUCH MORE POSITIVE LINE.

3. THE IRISH TIMES, IN A POORLY REASONED LEADER REPEATEDLY BLAMING THE PRIME MINISTER, SAYS:

"THE MOST OPTIMISTIC READING OF THE COMMUNIQUE CANNOT DISPEL THE INSTINCTIVE FEELING OF GLOOM AND DISAPPOINTMENT THAT, AFTER SO MANY HOURS OF TALKING, MRS THATCHER'S VIEW OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND QUESTION SHOULD REMAIN SO FAR AND SO FIRMLY APART FROM THE CONSENSUS OF NATIONALIST IRELAND AS EXPRESSED IN THE FORUM REPORT".

IT GOES ON TO QUESTION WHETHER THE TAOISEACH WAS WISE TO HOLD TALKS AT ALL AT THIS TIME.

4. THE IRISH PRESS PREDICTABLY LETS FLY. IN AN ANGRY BUT MORE COHERENT EDITORIAL, IT ACCUSES THE TAOISEACH OF HAVING LET DOWN THE IRISH NATION:

"CONSTITUTIONAL NATIONALISM FELL FLAT ON ITS FACE. MRS THATCHER FLATLY STATED THAT NORTHERN IRELAND WAS BRITISH AND THAT WAS THAT. NOT A BLIND BIT ABOUT THE INADEQUACIES OF THE NORTHERN STATE OR ITS AWFUL IMPACTS ON OUR OWN SOCIETY WERE EVEN HINTED AT."

THE EDITORIAL DESPAIRINGLY CONCLUDES

"WE ARE NOW BACK AT SQUARE MINUS ONE....."

AND THAT:

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'WE HAVE NO SOLUTION AND DR FITZGERALD MUST KNOW IN HIS HEART THAT HE AND HIS GOVERNMENT ARE ENTITLED TO FEEL LITTLE OF EITHER PRIDE, COMFORT OR REPUTATION.'

5. THE IRISH INDEPENDENT STRIKES A MORE POSITIVE NOTE, ARGUING THAT DR FITZGERALD HAS RETURNED TO DUBLIN WITH THE CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE THAT THE NORTH HAS BEEN MOVED MUCH HIGHER ON MRS THATCHER'S PERSONAL LIST OF PRIORITIES THAN IT HAS EVER BEEN, AND POINTS OUT THAT IT WAS NEVER ON TO BELIEVE THAT THE TALKS WOULD PRODUCE 'A MAGIC FORMULA WHICH COULD DISSOLVE THE NORTHERN PROBLEM BEFORE OUR EYES.' THE EDITORIAL NOTES THAT THE COMMUNIQUE CLEARLY INDICATES THAT A SEARCH IS TO BE MADE FOR STRUCTURES IN THE NORTH WHICH WILL REFLECT AND RESPECT THE IDENTITIES OF BOTH COMMUNITIES THERE. 'MR HAUGHEY IS ENTITLED TO BELIEVE THAT NOTHING OF SUBSTANCE HAS BEEN ACHIEVED AT THE TALKS ONLY IF HE CAN SHOW THAT HE KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT WAS TALKED ABOUT BETWEEN THE TWO HEADS OF STATE.' THE EDITORIAL CONCLUDES BY OBSERVING THAT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO REFRAIN FROM COMPARING SUMMIT MEETINGS TO FOOTBALL MATCHES. 'THIS IS NOT A CONTEST OF WILLS BETWEEN ENEMIES. IT IS AND MUST BE A COOPERATIVE EFFORT. THE TALKS HAVE MOST LIKELY RESULTED IN LONDON AND DUBLIN UNDERSTANDING ONE ANOTHER BETTER THAN AT ANY TIME IN THE RECENT PAST.'

STIMSON

NORTHERN IRELAND

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