

81998-Danison

MS



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

Tessa

This looks like a
spare. If so you
have the real file.
pls. rip this up.

Jane
26/9

Thank you for your letter of 3 September about the situation in Northern Ireland. It was most helpful to have this on the eve of my meeting with the Taoiseach.

Most of the points you made in your letter were touched on in the course of my talks with Mr. Lynch. As you know, he and I agree that the present extensive cooperation between the authorities of the two countries must be substantially improved. A number of suggestions were made by both Governments, including some of those mentioned by you, and these will be actively followed up.

I share your concern lest the outrage which followed the appalling events of Bank Holiday Monday should be allowed to fade without the achievement of any real change for the better in the present situation. I am determined that the impetus should be maintained. An early meeting between the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Irish Ministers is planned and we look for concrete results from this. However, I do not think that the introduction of selective detention or internment would be helpful. As regards James Abercorn's suggestion, I fear that security is not a matter for Community competence and that EEC funds would therefore not be available to finance the further improvement of the Irish Republic's security forces.

/ Thank you

Thank you for your kind remarks about my visit to Northern Ireland. It made a deep impression on me. You may be sure that the achievement of progress in the Province will remain for me a high priority.

John Biggs-Davison, Esq., M.P.

From: John Biggs-Davison, M.P.

C. I. Gow

URGENT AND
CONFIDENTIAL



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

3rd September 1979

Dear Prime Minister,

On 16th-17th July, we Officers of the Party's Northern Ireland Committee were briefed on security and other matters by the Chief Constable, the GOC and by officials at Stormont Castle.

From 28th August to 2nd September, I toured the province alone, meeting members of the Security Forces in the field and many members of the public of various opinions.

It was good to be in County Armagh at the time of your visit. I have waited until now to offer my congratulations on your courageous mission: I wanted to test the local effect. It was correctly described to me by Colonel Sleator of the Northern Ireland CBI as "a master stroke."

But I share the general anxiety lest, as the full horror of last Monday fades, the urgency to take the necessary strong measures will also fade, particularly in the Republic.

There could be no better opportunity to influence Dublin. But time is passing. I am persuaded that selective detention of "godfathers" could have been accomplished last Monday without respectable Catholic objection. (At mass yesterday in County Down, the parish priest described Mountbatten as his "favourite hero.") Only if we use the power to detain, consistently renewed by Parliament, can we expect the Republic to follow suit.

No troubles in this century have been quelled without internment in North and South.

If the "godfathers" can be neither killed nor convicted, what other course is open?

Extradition should be obtainable; but both extradition and the successful use of the Criminal Jurisdiction legislation passed by both Parliaments demand evidence.

As for Border security, there is international legal opinion (for example, the late Professor A.L. Goodhart) favouring "hot pursuit" and the elimination of guerrilla forces operating from across the frontier of a state unwilling or unable to suppress them. Mr. Lynch could be told that in pursuance of joint operations, the Irish Army and Air Corps and the Garda Siochana would be welcome to cross to our side of the Border. In other words, there should be a Border zone for such operations.

I presume that the many means of pressure on the Republic have been placed before you.

On the positive side, the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic are European partners, having a special bilateral relationship and a common enemy whom weak Irish governments are tempted to divert northwards.

Charles Rodgers of the RUC will have told you of the salutary effect of the Garda's anti-terrorist task force when it was deployed on the Border. James Abercorn suggested to me that European money might be found to finance the further improvement of the Republic's Security Forces. The task force itself is German-trained.

I am copying this to Humphrey Atkins and Peter Carrington.

With my best wishes for a difficult meeting,

Yours ever,

John

The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,
10 Downing Street,
London S.W.1.