

PRIME MINISTERDUBLIN: THE MEDIA

The media will be interested in only three things at the European Council, in descending order of fascination:

- (i) how you behave towards Dr FitzGerald;
- (ii) the security blanket; and (much more marginally)
- (iii) your post-Fontainebleau (and post-Paris/Avignon) brand of Europeanism.

In short, the media are unlikely to be much interested in substance; much more with appearances.

Your objectives

You wish to return from Dublin with Anglo/Irish relations no worse and if possible, improved.

You wish to see Fontainebleau sewn up and enlargement unblocked. If the latter is achieved you could pay a handsome tribute to Dr FitzGerald for his efforts on the Continent over the last few days.

Irish objectives

To ease Dr FitzGerald's pain and suffering - if possible by getting you to see at least some good in the Forum Report and to recognise the Nationalist minority in Ulster; and to have a successful Summit in Community terms.

Handling of the media

I shall have to give a press briefing on arrival. I think it would be helpful if I could take the following line in response to questions:

- (i) the Prime Minister recognises that Dr FitzGerald is

going to be a very busy man as President; but no doubt they will chat in the margins;

- (ii) there is no question of apologising, retracting or in any way dwelling on the press conference after Chequers. You then said absolutely nothing new; nothing over and above what Mr Prior said in July; or nothing you had not made clear to Dr FitzGerald and his party at Chequers. The talks were after all the most realistic you have had with the Irish Prime Minister.
- (iii) it is far better to proceed on the basis of realism than fantasy;
- (iv) both sides wish to go on talking and intend to do so preparatory to further meetings of Heads of Government in the New Year.
- (v) the objective of these talks is to promote peace and stability in Northern Ireland in which the Republic, as a border side, has a vested interest; and to bring about, a steady if possible, reconciliation between majority Unionists and minority Nationalists.
- (vi) you do care for all the people of the United Kingdom whatever political label, whether Unionist or Nationalist, and you feel equally responsible for all UK subjects.

You will wish to consider whether I could also say that you have privately communicated with Dr FitzGerald before the European Council and how far, if at all, I can go in discussing the flavour as distinct from content.

I think it would be useful if I could let it be known early that you had a chat with Dr FitzGerald in the margins, and if you could be photographed with him early on, provided

you do not appear to have contrived this.

Press Conference and Subsequent Interviews

I shall prepare a brief for you and will operate on the assumption that you will give the BBC, ITV, and IRN interviews afterwards. At this stage I think it would be unhelpful to give interviews to the Irish media. They will only be out to cause mischief.

The press conference will be difficult enough and it will be important for you to refuse to be drawn into a discussion on Chequers, the subsequent press conference or the state of Anglo/Irish relations beyond saying that you are going to continue talking to try to promote peace and stability in a realistic atmosphere.

You may care to have a word with me on the 'plane.

Bernard Ingham

2 December 1984

cc Mr Butler
Mr Powell
Jean Caines