



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT: PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT

I enclose a copy of the Prime Minister's statement for the House tomorrow. Since she will be entirely occupied with the Anglo-French Summit until 1450 tomorrow, there is effectively no scope for changes to the text.

The Prime Minister has asked for additional information on two points:

- (i) the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism. She would like a short background note explaining the main provisions of this and the advantages for the United Kingdom of Irish accession to it;
- (ii) the steps open to the Unionists to pursue their announced course of resigning their parliamentary seats. The BBC today suggested that there could be practical difficulties in implementing a mass resignation.

I should be grateful if information on these points and any additional supplementaries could be sent to Mr. Flesher by 1400 on 18 November.

I am copying this minute and enclosure to the Private Secretaries to the Northern Ireland Secretary, the Foreign Secretary, the Lord President, the Lord Privy Seal, the Attorney-General and the Chief Whip.

C.D.P.

(Charles Powell)

17 November 1985

SPIAEX

ANGLO-IRISH SUMMIT:

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

WITH PERMISSION, MR. SPEAKER, I SHOULD LIKE TO MAKE A
STATEMENT ABOUT THE MEETING WHICH I HAD WITH
THE TAOISEACH ON 15 NOVEMBER.

I WAS ACCOMPANIED BY MY RT. HON. AND LEARNED
FRIEND THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND
COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS AND MY RT. HON. FRIEND
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND.
DR. FITZGERALD WAS ACCOMPANIED BY MR. SPRING,
THE TANAISTE, AND BY MR. BARRY, THE IRISH
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

THE TAOISEACH AND I SIGNED AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN OUR
TWO GOVERNMENTS, WHICH HAS BEEN PUBLISHED IN
A COMMAND PAPER.

THE TEXT OF THE COMMUNIQUE, ISSUED AFTER THE MEETING, IS ALSO INCLUDED IN THE COMMAND PAPER.

THE PURPOSE OF THE AGREEMENT IS TO PROMOTE PEACE AND STABILITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND; TO ENCOURAGE RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE TWO COMMUNITIES THERE; TO CREATE AN IMPROVED CLIMATE OF FRIENDSHIP AND CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND; AND TO STRENGTHEN CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY IN COMBATING TERRORISM.

THE AGREEMENT WILL NOT COME INTO FORCE UNTIL IT HAS

BEEN APPROVED BY PARLIAMENT AND BY THE IRISH
DAIL.

THE HOUSE WILL HAVE AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY FOR
A FULL DEBATE.

THE AGREEMENT HAS TWO PRINCIPAL FEATURES.

THE IRISH GOVERNMENT HAS AFFIRMED IN A
BINDING INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT THAT THE
STATUS OF NORTHERN IRELAND WILL REMAIN
UNCHANGED SO LONG AS THAT IS THE WISH OF THE
MAJORITY OF ITS PEOPLE.

IT HAS ALSO RECOGNISED THAT THE PRESENT WISH
OF A MAJORITY IS TO REMAIN PART OF THE UNITED

KINGDOM.

THIS IS THE MOST FORMAL COMMITMENT TO THE
PRINCIPLE OF CONSENT MADE BY ANY IRISH
GOVERNMENT.

THE SECOND MAIN FEATURE OF THE AGREEMENT IS THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL
CONFERENCE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE
EXISTING ANGLO-IRISH INTERGOVERNMENTAL
COUNCIL.

THE CONFERENCE WILL BE SERVICED BY A
SECRETARIAT ON A CONTINUING BASIS.

IN THIS CONFERENCE THE IRISH GOVERNMENT MAY
PUT FORWARD VIEWS AND PROPOSALS ON CERTAIN

ASPECTS OF NORTHERN IRELAND AFFAIRS .

IF DEVOLUTION IS RESTORED - AND BOTH
GOVERNMENTS ARE COMMITTED TO SUPPORT THIS -
THEN THOSE MATTERS WHICH BECOME THE
RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT
WILL BE TAKEN OUT OF THE HANDS OF THE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE .

THE CONFERENCE WILL ALSO DISCUSS CROSS-BORDER
CO-OPERATION , INCLUDING IMPROVED SECURITY
CO-OPERATION .

THE TWO GOVERNMENTS HAVE AGREED TO MAKE
DETERMINED EFFORTS TO RESOLVE ANY DIFFERENCES
THAT MAY ARISE .

BUT THE CONFERENCE WILL NOT BE A
DECISION-MAKING BODY :

FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DECISIONS AND
ADMINISTRATION OF GOVERNMENT WILL REMAIN
WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT NORTH OF
THE BORDER AND WITH THE IRISH GOVERNMENT
SOUTH OF THE BORDER.

THE FIRST MEETING OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL

CONFERENCE WILL TAKE PLACE AS SOON AS
PRACTICABLE AFTER THE AGREEMENT ENTERS INTO
FORCE.

PARTICULAR SUBJECTS ON WHICH THE CONFERENCE
WILL CONCENTRATE AT ITS INITIAL MEETINGS

ARE:

- WAYS OF IMPROVING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE

SECURITY FORCES AND THE MINORITY COMMUNITY

IN NORTHERN IRELAND:

- ACTION TO IMPROVE SECURITY CO-OPERATION
BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS;
- AND WAYS TO HELP TO UNDERLINE THE
IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE
ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE.

THE AGREEMENT RECOGNISES THAT IT WOULD BE FOR

PARLIAMENTARY DECISION IN WESTMINSTER AND

DUBLIN WHETHER TO ESTABLISH AN ANGLO-IRISH

PARLIAMENTARY BODY OF THE KIND DESCRIBED IN

THE ANGLO-IRISH STUDIES REPORT OF NOVEMBER

1981.

THE IRISH GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED IN THE COMMUNIQUE
ITS INTENTION TO ACCEDE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
TO THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON THE SUPPRESSION
OF TERRORISM.
WE WELCOME THIS.

MR. SPEAKER, NO SINGLE AGREEMENT CAN RESOLVE THE
DEEPROOTED AND COMPLEX PROBLEMS OF NORTHERN
IRELAND AND DELIVER THE PEACE FOR WHICH THE
GREAT MAJORITY OF PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND
LONG.
BUT I BELIEVE THE PRESENT AGREEMENT WILL MAKE
AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION:

- IT MAINTAINS AND CONFIRMS THE STATUS OF
NORTHERN IRELAND AS PART OF THE UNITED
KINGDOM AND RECOGNISES THE LEGITIMACY OF THE
UNIONIST POSITION.

- IT PROVIDES FOR CO-OPERATION IN THE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE TO BE A TWO-WAY
STREET.

WE SHALL WISH TO PURSUE MATTERS AFFECTING THE
REPUBLIC IN THE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE OF
NORTHERN IRELAND FOR INSTANCE IMPROVED
SECURITY AND ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION.

- IT ENCOURAGES THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN
NORTHERN IRELAND TO REACH AGREEMENT ON AN
ACCEPTABLE FORM OF DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT.

- IT OFFERS HOPE TO ALL THOSE IN BOTH

COMMUNITIES WHO WANT TO DEFEAT THE MEN OF
VIOLENCE AND WANT TO WORK TOGETHER PEACEFULLY
FOR A BETTER FUTURE FOR THEIR CHILDREN.
THAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE AGREEMENT.
IT IS IN THIS SPIRIT THAT I COMMEND IT TO THE
HOUSE.

Chafetz,

I enclose a short letter of
congratulation and encouragement
to the Prime Minister on the Anglo-Irish
agreement.

Perhaps you would pass it on. You
are very welcome to read it.

Racey

[The Prime Minister]

Government has been that the armed forces should operate in aid of the civil power. We have been trying to make arrangement progressively to bring that into effect. The only difference about the Ulster Defence Regiment relates not to the agreement itself but to the particular matter which I read out from the communiqué. It says that the conference will consider the objective of ensuring "as rapidly as possible that, save in the most exceptional circumstances, there is a police presence in all operations which involve direct contact with the community." That is in pursuance of the general policy that in a democracy the armed forces act in aid of the civil power.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): Does the Prime Minister agree that a great deal will depend upon the implementation of the agreement? Can she assure the House that it will be implemented in the same spirit of good faith as was evident on Friday between the two Prime Ministers? Despite the ill-judged and prejudged reaction from certain quarters, my party believes that this agreement is an opportunity to make progress towards peace and reconciliation. We shall offer our fullest cooperation to the new institution. That includes willingness to enter into discussion and dialogue with anybody in Northern Ireland, particularly those who represent Northern Ireland, in this House, about any matter that will lead to peace and reconciliation, including the sharing of responsibility for certain matters in Northern Ireland. Recognition of the validity of both traditions, which was explicit in this agreement, is the only true basis for reconciliation. My party and those who support me do not believe that there will be any resolution of the conflict in Northern Ireland which involves in any way the crushing or the defeat of the Protestant heritage there. Not only would that be unthinkable; it would be impossible.

The Prime Minister: May I most warmly thank the hon. Gentleman for what he has said? I believe that his constructive contribution will help greatly to defeat the men of violence and to bring peace and stability to both traditions in Northern Ireland. Whenever there is a change, obviously hopes and fears are raised on both sides. It is for us in this House and those who take the lead in all communities in Northern Ireland to quell those fears and to bring forward those hopes so that we may move forward to the peace and stability that we all want.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne) *rose*—

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Gow: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in these coming months, and whatever view we take about the Anglo-Irish agreement, restraint in public utterance will assist, and intemperate and inflammatory public utterance will injure the true cause of Ulster?

Is my right hon. Friend further aware that charges of treachery levelled against her, whether within or without this House, are resented deeply by me and will be repudiated totally by me?

The Prime Minister: I warmly agree with my hon. Friend about restraint in public utterance. His objectives for peace and stability and for defeating the men of violence are the same as mine. I am very grateful to him for what he said in the latter part of his question.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): No one who has had any responsibility for Ulster—for Northern

Ireland—could do aught else than wish the Government well in their endeavours. I was especially pleased to hear the words of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume).

Is the right hon. Lady aware that I regret the reports in the weekend newspapers that, in the light of the response of the Unionists, there is talk of sending 9,000 soldiers and two battalions of paras — [AN HON. MEMBER: "Rubbish."] I am referring to what has been reported.

I have noted that, unlike in 1974, the Unionists on these Benches have not had any truck with paramilitaries and are not talking about an Ulster workers' strike; They are talking about standing again for election and of going to the High Court. At least in the short run, we should give them credit for that. We must fight their arguments, if that is necessary, with the spoken word and not with threats, because that would be counter-productive to Northern Ireland.

The crisis is likely to come next year. If the Ulster Unionists win through overwhelmingly in their communities, the Orange card will no longer be able to be played over here—the Orange card will no longer be a trump card. I simply say to the Government that it is about that time that they should be thinking, because it is my view that the union is at risk not from this part of the United Kingdom but from within Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for raising the matter of that report. I know of no such plans as those referred to in that report, and we have issued a statement from No. 10 Downing street to that effect. I do not see any need to increase the security forces in Northern Ireland as a result of the agreement. I hope that any views that are to be put will be put in the customary way, through representatives in this House or through representatives in the Assembly or elsewhere in Northern Ireland. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for allowing me to make that clear.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Should not those who are most vocal in their wish that Northern Ireland should remain part of the United Kingdom bear in mind the fact that it follows logically from their position that the acceptability of this agreement is a matter for the United Kingdom as a whole, and that the United Kingdom will warmly applaud the agreement and wish it success?

The Prime Minister: Yes, my right hon. Friend is correct. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom and will remain so unless the majority wish the contrary and the house endorses their wish. Decisions are a matter for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Robert MacLennan (Caithness and Sutherland): On behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I join in expressing the hope that this agreement assists the process of peace and security. Is it the Prime Minister's intention to table a motion and allow a free vote on the proposal that there should be an Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the first part of his question. There will be a motion, subject to the approval of my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal. We hope to have a debate next week and we shall table a motion to approve the agreement. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the answer that he wishes to receive on the voting. The parliamentary tier is a matter for the House and for the Dail.