

ANGLO-IRISH SUMMIT MEETING: RECORD OF MINISTERIAL  
DISCUSSIONS ON 7 NOVEMBER 1983 AT CHEQUERS

Present:

Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP	Mr Dick Spring TD
Rt Hon James Prior MP	Mr Peter Barry TD
Mr P H C Eyers	Mr Michael Lillis

Super-levy

1. Mr Barry said that from Ireland's point of view it was of great importance that the milk industry should be allowed to develop. Milk was as important to the Irish economy as oil to that of Great Britain. The dairy industry generated between 6% and 9% of their GNP. If the super-levy was introduced it would not allow the dairy industry to develop as it otherwise could. The Irish Government understood the UK concern about the cost of CAP but it was not in the Community's interest to prevent the development of an industry of such importance to a member country. Ireland had had no previous possibility of developing its dairy industry. It was in the Community interest that the dairy industry should develop. Sir G Howe said that he understood the importance of the dairy industry both to Northern Ireland and to the south. But there was a real problem: the tremendous over-production of milk within the Community. Milk absorbed approximately one-third of the cost of the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Agricultural

Ps (Mr. Richetta  
NIO amendments  
now incorporated.

Patrick Eyers  
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Policy absorbed two-thirds of the Community's total own resources. The question was how the Community should address the milk surplus. Clearly it would be necessary to be tough on price. The super-levy was not an alternative but a supplement to pressure on price. He thought the premise must be that there should be a tough policy on price. The present situation could not last.

2. Mr Barry said that the problem was that the surplus was not generated by traditional farms. It came largely from intensive producers in Great Britain, the Netherlands and Denmark. This intensive production required the import of cheap cereals, for instance from Thailand, and this produced a knock-on effect since the Community's own grain cereals were not used and the consequent surpluses increased the cost of the CAP.

Sir Geoffrey Howe said that the increase in milk production reflected the price levels and also technical advances in production techniques. He thought Ireland's milk production had increased 50% since its entry into the Community. It was not possible not to address the question of price even if the social question must also be addressed. Over-production would otherwise go up further.

3. Mr Prior said that it was ridiculous to allow the cheap import of manioc. It was not possible to deal with the over-production of milk simply by the super-levy which had great disadvantages for both Ireland and Northern Ireland, though the disadvantages would not be



quite as serious if the Community moved away from taking 1981 as the base to taking 1983, as seemed to be happening. There was no alternative to operating on price. He was not sure about the possibility of an increase in the co-responsibility levy. Mr Barry said that the co-responsibility levy was something which the Irish did not like but it was better than the other courses under discussion. Mr Prior noted that it would increase prices. Mr Barry said that that would be fairer. The whole aim of the CAP was to stop the flow of people into the cities and to retain people on the land. Sir Geoffrey Howe said he thought that if the case for a tough price policy was accepted Irish producers would not be at a disadvantage. Mr Barry said that this was true in view of the quality of the land. The problem was created by the surpluses. One would have to look at how those could be eliminated. It was the view of the Irish Department of Agriculture that the exclusion of the import of dairy products into the Community and of cheap cereals such as manioc would of itself solve the problem. Sir Geoffrey Howe said that New Zealand exports had already been very substantially reduced. It was not possible to go further.

4. Mr Prior said that Britain was a net importer of dairy products. We shared the Irish concern about the super-levy. Measures with a greater impact on prices were necessary. If the price increased until the United Kingdom became self-sufficient the Irish would lose our market. Mr Barry pointed out that agriculture employed



3% of the British electorate. It employed 30% of the Irish. Mr Spring said that the Irish Labour Party was also concerned. The percentage of workers in the dairy industry in Ireland was very high.

5. Sir Geoffrey Howe said that he was concerned that even if the negotiations at Athens were successful there would be pressure from European colleagues for the imposition of the super-levy. The UK and the Republic both disliked the super-levy but for different reasons. For our part we thought that it would lead to the distortion of the market and that there was too much scope for evasion. It would be difficult to construct a fair super-levy mechanism. It did present a theoretical supplement to control by price but it would be difficult to arrange it so that it was not evaded. Mr Prior said that French farmers were sure to find some way of evading it. Mr Barry noted that the Northern Ireland farmers had been in touch with the Irish Department of Agriculture to press them to oppose the super-levy. Mr Prior said that Northern Ireland milk production was very high. An increase in the levy would be relatively disadvantageous to Northern Ireland. The super-levy, calculated taking 1983 as a base, would cost the province £25 million. Sir G Howe said the 1981 baseline would have very harsh effects. It would have the same effect as a 12% price cut if price alone were operating. Mr Prior said that the right approach might be to operate partly on price and partly a quota system. Action would also have to be taken against cheap cereal imports. Mr Barry said the



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trouble was that the Danes and the Dutch would argue that the Community ought to continue to support third world countries who supplied the cheap cereals. Mr Prior said they should keep it at home as they used to do.

Progress at Athens

6. Turning to the question of progress at Athens, Sir G Howe said that talking to the French ten days before he had agreed on the very great importance of cracking the Community's outstanding problems at Athens. Failure to solve the current agricultural problems would be a negative signal for the future of the European Community as a whole. There was now general agreement that there was a financial and budgetary problem to be solved (that had not been so apparent four years ago). Some were inclined to say that the solution should be sought on the revenue side, among them Denmark, France, Germany and the Commission itself. The UK believed that this approach was right if there was an appropriate safety net. The safety net should take care of Ireland's position (and also those of Portugal and Spain in due course). It should produce an answer which met the UK's needs without harming Ireland's interests. It was necessary to have a logical arrangement which would run for years ahead. The new German ideas for a safety net adopted a number of our ideas. Mr Barry said that his first impression was that the Irish could live with it. Sir G Howe said that it did not go far enough. In the end a safety net would be needed. It ought to be possible between now and the meeting at the end of



November to work out a plan for a framework on which Heads of Government could take a decision at the European Council. Mr Barry said that although it was hard to see how new policies might benefit Ireland they were necessary to avoid cynicism about the Community.

7. Sir G Howe said that it would be useful to announce a date for the cut-off of lead in petrol. This would be of interest to Ireland both because of its effect on the environment and because it should encourage the development of the European motor industry. Measures of this kind helped people understand the direction one was taking. A more important area - about which it would be possible at the moment only to give a signal - would be action on air transport. A positive commitment to reduce protectionism in this field would be widely popular.

Mr Barry suggested it would have also the advantage that it would encourage people to take holidays in Europe rather than outside Europe. He asked if Sir G Howe was thinking of a combined European airline. Sir G Howe said he was not sure what might be done but competitive subsidisation clearly raised prices. The United States had now gone through the deregulation process. There had been occasional bumps but on the whole deregulation had helped the development of the airline industry. Mr Barry wondered whether there was not a feeling among some countries that they needed their own commercial airlines as a back-up in case of war. Sir G Howe said that competitive pressure could be very useful: pressure generated by British Caledonian had now brought British



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Airways from loss-making to profit-making. Mr Barry said that low fares on the transatlantic routes were bleeding Aer Lingus dry. He thought a general transport policy might be needed. Sir G Howe said that transport restrictions raised the cost of European products. Similar problems existed in the field of insurance. The problems had existed for more than ten years. Mr Barry said that it was important that the Heads of Government should give the 15 million unemployed in Europe some hope. Sir G Howe said that it was important to get away from endless public squabbling.

8. Mr Prior asked why Irish farmers who appeared to do well on Ireland's entry into the Community now seemed to do badly. Mr Barry said that on first entry into the Community the prices they got for their produce were high against the background of their earlier poverty. But many were still not up to European standards. Many had invested their money sensibly but standards were still not as good as they could be. Mr Prior said that he could see no alternative to a squeeze on agricultural prices to control production.

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9. Sir G Howe said that the European Parliament's report on agriculture was potentially explosive. The huge surpluses in the Community were preventing progress in under-developed countries. Europe was producing too much. Mr Barry said that the history of agriculture



suggested that production was cyclical. It could not be treated like cars or tyres. Sir G Howe said that the problem was that the Community had put in place support arrangements which pretty well guaranteed a surplus of output and a growing one at that. Mr Barry said that the CAP had originally been designed to make Europe self-sufficient in agricultural produce. Mr Prior said that the situation was made worse by the fact that the United States Government was subsidising food production to an enormous extent - some \$35 billion a year in price support, compensation for structural change and payment in kind.

#### Windscale

10. Mr Spring said that since the TV programme a few days before about Windscale considerable concern had arisen in Ireland, particularly in the Dublin area. Mr Prior said that HMG had ordered an enquiry by a distinguished scientist.

#### Grenada

11. Sir G Howe noted that all now wanted to see a return to proper democratic arrangements in Grenada.

#### Sheepmeat Subsidy Regions

12. Mr Barry said that he understood that the Commission had proposed a little while ago that the whole island of Ireland should be treated as a single region for the purpose of sheepmeat subsidy. Mr Jopling had however written to the Commission opposing this arrangement. The



Irish authorities regretted this. Sir G Howe said that the reason for which Mr Jopling had written was HMG's wish to prevent what was a technical issue becoming controversial. HMG were concerned that to detach Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom and to integrate it with Ireland for this purpose would be politically controversial. Mr Barry suggested that this line was in contradiction with what both sides were trying to do in the Anglo-Irish context. Sir G Howe said that the Commission's action would have created strains which would have been counter-productive. Mr Prior said that the proposal contained no advantage for Northern Ireland farmers. He understood that the question was no longer at issue. M. Thorn had decided that Northern Ireland and Republic should continue as separate regions for the the next two years. Mr Barry said that where such steps were not economically disadvantageous to either side, the Irish position was that they should go ahead. Mr Prior agreed generally but said that the implication had been that a political framework was being imposed by the European Community. That would have raised problems and set back sensible arrangements. It would have stirred up those hostile to better Anglo-Irish relations without doing any good. Mr Jopling's letter had in any case now been overtaken by events. He wondered whether this was not a storm in a teacup. HMG's view was that the more we did together the better, especially in the field of agriculture. He had not himself been associated with the decision. He would keep in mind what Mr Barry had said when the issue came up again. He would have gone into it



in more detail by the time they next met. But it was important to avoid an appearance of European Community intervention in the affairs of Northern Ireland against the background of the row which there had been over the actions of the European Parliament.

#### Northern Ireland

13. Mr Spring said that the Irish Government felt grave concern about the deterioration of the situation in Northern Ireland, and in particular about the alienation of the minority community from the security forces and from law and order. Mr Prior said that he had found no deterioration for instance in Catholic participation in such bodies as health boards. But as far as nationalist politicians were concerned there had been a change. Sinn Fein were taking control of the nationalist vote and there was a greater sense of despair in the SDLP. He wondered what was going to happen to the SDLP and how they might be helped. There were few signs of their helping themselves. There was a good deal of talk in the press about joint sovereignty. It was difficult to see how in practice that would work. The question of a role for the Republic in the policing of West Belfast had been raised. He wondered what would happen when the first Garda was killed. It would be useful to have his Irish colleagues' view on what we could do to help the SDLP. John Hume seemed to see security as the minority community's first concern.

14. Mr Barry said that he was surprised that John Hume



should think security came before political structure. He did not see how nationalists could support the security forces without a degree of political control from Dublin. They looked to Dublin in their difficulties. Mr Prior said he did not see how you could have a part of the United Kingdom policed even in part by men with responsibility to another country. Sir G Howe said that he understood the political force of the nationalist perception but what practical proposal did it lead to? Mr Barry said that it was necessary to set about the reconciliation of the two groups. The first step must be the elimination of violence. Nationalists historically and by their voting had shown that they wanted some sort of say for Dublin in the north. He agreed that joint sovereignty amounted very nearly to a contradiction in terms. But without political development which allowed the nationalists to take a political and constitutional role in Northern Ireland violence would continue. Mr Prior said that he agreed entirely. It was essential that the nationalists be seen to exercise a political and governmental role in the affairs of Northern Ireland. But that was not what he understood was now being suggested, which was that somehow there should be a police force in Catholic areas under the control of an institution outside Northern Ireland. It might be possible to start from the bottom developing cooperation between police forces on the border, perhaps with elements of a common force under the control of the authorities in the north when in the north, and under the control of the authorities in the



*when in the South*  
south. But he did not see how police in the north could be under the control of the Republic. Mr Barry said this was true unless there were a political institution in the north which had a Dublin dimension. The nationalists felt as isolated in the north as unionists would feel in the south. What was needed was some role for Dublin in running the north so that the nationalists saw their interests protected and their aspirations taken into account. The only hope for the future was some degree of involvement of Dublin. Mr Prior asked: if one could go that far how would the unionists concerns be met? Would this be by a change in Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution? Mr Barry said that if one got as far as that, an entirely new Constitution would, he thought, be necessary, though he had not thought out the matter. Mr Spring said that it would certainly be necessary to examine Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution.

15. *in fact* Sir G Howe said that what offered assurance to the nationalists was the existing political structure. If one went on to say that the minority would like to see the involvement of Dublin, and to visualise the insertion in the political structures of representation from Dublin, with the Garda alongside the RUC or at least a police presence owing loyalty to Dublin, the question would be raised of the democratic legitimacy of Dublin's involvement. There was a practical question also: what reaction would there be to the presence on the ground of representatives of Dublin's involvement? They would be a focus which attracted violence. Did the Irish have ideas



on how this could be avoided? Mr Barry said that he did not see that the Garda uniform would get more than a temporary welcome unless there was also a political element. He did not see how the minority community could identify or support Gardai in the north unless they were directed by a group with whom they could identify (though he was aware that John Hume did not necessarily agree with this view). Mr Prior noted that the existing police authority had Catholics on it. It might be possible to contemplate a [redacted] committee with representation on it from the minority, the majority and the British Government. But to include Dublin participation would be to stir up a hornet's nest. It would seem a direct path to Irish unity. What quid pro quo might there be? Action on Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution might be one possibility. A simple statement like that made at Sunningdale could be challenged in the courts. He could not see how anything approaching joint sovereignty could be made to work.

16. Mr Spring said that alienation continued to grow. Sinn Fein and the IRA had growing influence and other nationalists were unable to compete. The Provisionals did all the constituency work and prevented others from doing so by intimidation. The Provisionals were not going to work within the existing Northern Ireland system. The problem was to give the nationalists politics in which they felt they could participate. Mr Prior said that he did not disagree. The question was how did you give sufficient to enable them to recover



from PSF the supporters they had lost. They had forfeited support by losing the Fitts and the Devlins. The party had lost its way. Mr Barry said that they were tired men but they were the bravest politicians he knew, and they were the only representatives of constitutional nationalism. Mr Prior said that Mr Hume's view was that without security there could be no progress on the political side. To improve security it would be necessary to recruit a new police force in the Catholic areas in which Catholics could have confidence. It would have to be answerable to some organisation involving Dublin and representatives of nationalist opinion in the north. How could it be possible in constitutional politics for the police force not to be answerable to the sovereign power? Sir G Howe said that all agreed on the analysis and on the need for disalienation of the community. HMG's inclination was to try to get the minority to look at the structures in the north. To introduce an element of Dublin involvement might take the minority community still further away from structures which we were trying to foster. Mr Barry said that if Dublin and London agreed what needed to be done, it should be possible to find a way.

17. Mr Prior said that the problem was security and the difficulty of associating the minority community with the forces of law and order. Instead of starting at the top with ideas of joint sovereignty it might be better to start at the bottom and try cooperation, allowing police from the south to operate under the RUC and vice versa,



with a joint police authority to whom problems could be referred. Mr Barry said that he had asked nationalists by whom they would wish to be stopped on a dark night. They had given as order of preference: by British troops, by the RUC and by the UDR. Mr Prior said that he had been struck by this remark when Mr Barry had made it to him earlier. He had sought the views of priests in West Belfast. All had said that Catholics there would prefer in such circumstances to be stopped by the RUC rather than by British troops. Mr Barry recognised that the RUC was a changed force but said that the Provisionals had mounted an effective campaign against it. Mr Prior said that the UDR had had 20% of Catholics when it was started up. The Provisionals had reduced this to a tiny number. He thought that there were probably vast numbers of Catholics in police forces in Great Britain who would wish to serve in Northern Ireland if it were possible.

#### Elections in Northern Ireland

18. Mr Barry asked whether Mr Prior would be able to do anything about personation before the European election. Mr Prior said that it would not be possible to introduce new laws by then but the authorities in Northern Ireland were doing what they could to tighten up the electoral register. HMG hoped to introduce a Bill in time for the local elections in 1985. There were problems in amending the Representation of the People Act. The tightening up necessary in Northern Ireland went entirely against the present trend in Great Britain. He was worried about the 1984 election. The Provisional Sinn Fein might do better



than the SDLP. Adams might well stand in the European election. He thought that the support for Sinn Fein was not a question of endorsement for violence, or even of nationalism, but arose from bread and butter issues. Sinn Fein operated very competently on the ground in the running of their clinics. Mr Spring commented that the SDLP were not being allowed to do this because of intimidation. Sir G Howe said that there was a curious contradiction implicit in the use made by violent men of the democratic system.

19. Mr Spring said he found it particularly disturbing that young people were turning to Sinn Fein. The two separate identities in the north needed some vehicle for expression. Nationalists generally accepted the unionists' desire for a British connection but nationalists in the north needed to be able to express their Irishness. Mr Prior said that HMG accepted this and had written it into their White Papers for some years. The problem was finding an acceptable means for expressing it. He was prepared to push the unionists but needed to have something clear and positive to go for. He thought joint sovereignty was no more than a catch phrase. What did it imply? Mr Barry said that he thought it meant simply a role for Dublin in the affairs of Northern Ireland. Mr Prior asked how one could in practice put that into operation. Would the criminal law of West Belfast be that of Northern Ireland or of the south? Mr Barry suggested that the laws of Great Britain did not apply in Northern Ireland - a parallel could be



drawn here. Mr Prior said that the statute books in Northern Ireland and Great Britain were different but the common law and the general law were the same. But how could you operate in West Belfast a different law from that in East Belfast? Mr Barry said that it would have to be the same. Sir G Howe said that if, entirely hypothetically, one postulated a presence from the south in the administration of the north, according Dublin a right to be consulted would not increase democratic legitimacy in the nationalist community; but it would raise the fury of the unionists. Mr Spring said that this was true unless the change brought a peaceful situation which allowed people to live ordinary daily lives. Sir G Howe said that such a change might be seen as the result of popular support for Sinn Fein and therefore increase that support in the minority community. Mr Barry conceded that there would be a rump of nationalists opposed to such a development but the majority would be in favour.

20. Mr Prior said that to look towards joint policing, perhaps involving ideas such as a joint authority, would be more fruitful than looking for joint sovereignty. There was no possibility of joint sovereignty without a total change of the Constitution in the south. Indeed he noted that when such suggestions first came up there had been talk about a change in the Constitution. Mr Barry said that if violence could be eliminated by joint policing he would be all for it, but he thought that the Gardai would be the first target of the Provos and INLA.



Mr Prior said that he did not understand what was being suggested. The idea seemed to be that one would have policing in the north in Catholic areas controlled by the Dublin government. Mr Barry said that you would have to have such policing all over the north. He had in mind a force in the north controlled by Dublin and London which included both nationalists and unionists. Mr Prior asked of whom this force would be comprised. Mr Barry said that it would not be possible to sack the RUC.

Sir G Howe said he found it hard to visualise a Catholic component in the north based in the south. He suspected the appearance in the north of southern Catholics in this role would provoke a sharp reaction. Mr Prior said that if you had a joint police force it would have to be reciprocal and cover the island of Ireland as a whole.

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Mr Barry said that this would not be so if you set up a completely new force operating in the north only. Mr Prior said that an all-Ireland police force would be more logical.

21. Mr Barry asked what Mr Prior would envisage.

Mr Prior said he thought in practice there would have to be one force mainly in the north and one mainly in the south with a degree of reciprocity. Mr Barry asked how this might be controlled. Mr Prior said he thought there could be joint control by the United Kingdom and Dublin governments working together. This idea was fraught with difficulties but it might be possible to look at it.

Sir G Howe said the objective was easy to identify, it



was the means that were difficult. Mr Barry said that a solution would require structures in which the nationalist community could have confidence.

Falklands at the UN

22. Sir G Howe said that he understood the Irish would be abstaining in the UN General Assembly debate on the Falklands. Mr Barry said that he thought this was so, but would confirm it.



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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

16 November 1983

Anglo-Irish Summit: Records

Thank you for your letter of 16 November. In my view, it would be consistent with views which the Prime Minister has expressed on the recording of discussions at the Anglo-Irish Summit if the draft record which you enclosed were either given no distribution or an extremely restricted one (perhaps to Private Offices only).

I am copying this letter to John Lyon (Northern Ireland Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

A. J. COLES

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

16 November 1983

Dear John,

Anglo-Irish Summit: Records

/ Thank you for your letter of 14 November. As requested I enclose a copy of the draft record of the session between the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on our side, and Mr Spring and Mr Barry on the Irish side. This draft incorporates amendments suggested by the Northern Ireland Office.

I am copying this letter to John Lyon (Northern Ireland Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,

Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)  
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street