

SECRET
AND PERSONAL



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

26 June 1984

Dear John,

MEETING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE TAOISEACH: 26 JUNE

The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach met at the Chateau de Fontainebleau today. Sir Robert Armstrong, Mr. Nally and Mr. C.D. Powell were also present.

The Taoiseach recalled that he looked forward to hearing in due course the Government's reply to the proposals which the Irish Government had put forward in strict confidence on 11 May, following the Government's proposals in March. In essence, the Irish Government were prepared to face up to the problem of amending Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution, provided that in return it could be assured of a package of measures in the North which would allow a durable solution. In reply to the Prime Minister's question whether he thought a referendum on the Constitution could be won, the Taoiseach said that the Forum Report had been a valuable educational exercise. It had been the first time that Irish opinion in the Republic had been properly exposed to the Unionist viewpoint. When he had subsequently stated publicly that "joint authority" (as defined in the Forum Report) would not affect British sovereignty, no-one had come forward to protest that he was foresaking the Nationalist viewpoint. This showed that opinion had moved. The Prime Minister wondered whether such a change of opinion would stand up to the pressures of a referendum campaign. The Taoiseach thought that, provided that there was a solution which was supported by the SDLP, it would be very hard for any of the parties in the Republic to oppose it successfully. There was a widespread desire for a moderate solution. He had taken encouragement from the recent referendum in which there had been a 3:1 majority for extending voting rights to British citizens, without any preliminary campaign.

The Prime Minister asked whether she had correctly understood that Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution would be eliminated. The Taoiseach replied that they would be radically changed. He needed to think about the precise formulation.

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cc: MASTON

*cc: Sir P. Creadock
Sir A. Adland*

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But the territorial claim would become an aspiration for unity dependent upon the consent of the majority in Northern Ireland. The important point was to reassure the Unionists that there was no current claim against British sovereignty. Some risks had to be taken if a solution was to be found. The Prime Minister observed that "joint authority" inevitably involved a derogation from sovereignty. The Taoiseach contested this. It was up to Her Majesty's Government to decide, within its sovereignty, how to conduct the administration of the North. He had been struck by how vigorously the SDLP had insisted upon the concept of "joint authority" because it offered the prospect of immediate progress.

The Prime Minister asked the Taoiseach how he saw the way forward. They were due to have bilateral discussions later in the year. Fundamental decisions were involved for which time was needed. Sir Robert Armstrong said that he and Mr. Nally might meet in the meantime to pursue their confidential discussions.

In a brief discussion about what should be said to the press about the meeting, the Taoiseach said that he had been careful not to build up expectations. It was very important, and would be even more so in future, to preserve the confidentiality of exchanges. He had been disturbed by a recent article in the Boston Globe. A brief text for use with the press was agreed (copy annexed).

The Taoiseach said that he wished the Prime Minister to know that he would be pursuing direct contacts with the Official Unionists, which they had been seeking. There had also been some indirect contacts with the Reverend Ian Paisley for the first time in many years, though he did not know how authoritative the channel of communication was. The Prime Minister thanked the Taoiseach for keeping her informed, while observing that it would be very difficult to hold confidential contacts in London.

The Taoiseach said that he had read the Unionist document, "The Way Forward" very carefully and considered it positive. In several ways it was in tune with the Forum Report. He handed over a note analysing it (copy annexed). He asked how the Government would approach next week's debate in the House of Commons. The Prime Minister said that it would largely be by amplifying the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's immediate comments following publication of the Forum Report. The specific proposals in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 in the Report were not a basis for progress. But there were a lot of new elements to look at. The Government would not wish at this stage to go on to examine the fundamental equation: how to reassure Unionist opinion while at the same time providing for the Republic to be -involved in the North, for instance in security. The

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Taoiseach said that he had been disappointed that the Government's first reaction had been dismissive of "joint authority". He had gone out of his way to underline that "joint authority" would not affect sovereignty. The Prime Minister asked what would be the reaction of opinion in the South if the Government were to say there should be joint authority over security 25 miles South of the Border? The Taoiseach said it would obviously be ill-received, and would be regarded as unnecessary. It would create three borders instead of one. It was important not to tar "joint authority" with the joint sovereignty brush. As regards joint security, anything in this field would have to be linked in some way with a political arrangement. The Prime Minister observed that this was exactly where one ran up against the problem of joint sovereignty. That was the argument with which the Government would be faced by the Unionists. The Taoiseach said that he felt strongly that whatever was agreed must be once and for all. The Unionists must not fear that it was the first step in a creeping erosion of their position.

The Taoiseach said that he would be seeing Opposition Leaders in London on 27 June. He would not, of course, mention the contents of his discussion with the Prime Minister. He would draw attention to the Forum Report and encourage them to be receptive.

There was a brief exchange on the problem of personation of elections, during which the Prime Minister thanked the Taoiseach for having warned us of the likelihood of attempts by Sinn Fein supporters in the South to vote in the European Elections in the North.

Finally, the Taoiseach enquired how the Prime Minister saw matters developing in the longer term. For his part, he saw advantage in a conference rather than an intergovernmental meeting. One could not be sure that all Parties would attend. But as many as possible should be involved. The Prime Minister noted several questions which needed to be answered. At what stage should consultations be enlarged? How did one sell conclusions reached in intergovernmental discussions? The Taoiseach said that he thought that a joint declaration of principles could be a useful way of starting. The Prime Minister did not comment directly on this, and the discussion had to break off at this point.

I am copying this letter to Len Appleyard (FCO), Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office) and Bryan Cartledge (Cabinet Office).

yes surely, *C.D. Powell*

(C.D. POWELL)

Notes on common ground between Forum Report and Unionist "Way Forward"

1. OUP refers to need for us to provide blueprint for pluralist society: one that would accommodate unionists in a quite new way, not consistent with an existing ethos or Constitution.

Note This is met in Forum Report by reference to [redacted] non-denominational Constitution.

2. OUP stress on need for acceptance that for those seeking United Ireland "consent" must include the logical corollary, viz. right of unionists to refuse consent to transfer of sovereignty.

Note This is met in Forum Report by statement that "arrangements for a new and sovereign Ireland would have to be freely negotiated and agreed by the people of the North and by the people of the South; also by the inclusion in the Report of the concept of joint authority which does not have implications for sovereignty".

3. Recognition by OUP of "two senses of national and political identity and allegiance."
4. Recognition by OUP of need for acceptance "by both communities of each others' hopes and fears".
5. Recognition by OUP of "responsibility of the majority to persuade the minority that the province [redacted] is also theirs".
6. The expressed willingness of the OUP to "accept an Irish dimension in the form of "State recognition of the legitimacy of fostering and financing distinctively Irish cultural activities in Northern Ireland".
7. Recognition by OUP of case for establishment of citizens' rights as component of package for devolved government.
8. OUP statement - most significant - "every effort should be made to provide for a devolved administration in which majority and minority representatives can participate without prejudice to their position on the constitutional question."

The Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Margaret Thatcher, FRS, MP, and the Taoiseach, Dr. Garret FitzGerald, TD, met this morning in the margins of the European Council at Fontainebleau. They had a general discussion of Anglo-Irish relations following the publication of the Report of the New Ireland Forum, and agreed to hold a bilateral meeting later in the year.