

CDD

Anglo-Irish Relations

The questions are:

1. Do you want to send a message to the Taoiseach?

NO

2. Do you want to get on record your views on the Forum report by way of a written PQ and answer?

NO

I think a message a good idea but it should not be apologetic. If it is, it will be treated as Thatcher backs down. I have suggested some amendments to it in blue ink. Those in red are Mr Hurd's suggestions.

I find the idea of the written PQ and answer rather contrived, though the text seems fine. Might it be better to get Mr Hurd to answer it?

So: agree message as amended?

NO

agree written answer by Mr Hurd, if he is willing?

NOT NECESSARY

agree to see John Hume fairly soon?

Yes

C.D.P.

27 November 1984

This whole proposal is too contrived & too apologetic. Why? no

Ref. A084/3160

PRIME MINISTER

Anglo-Irish Relations: Northern Ireland

I have now been able to discuss with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Northern Ireland Office the message from the Taoiseach and the aide-memoire attached to my minute of 22 November (A084/3109).

2. The Taoiseach refers to two matters which arose at your press conference after the Summit: your comments on the Forum Report and your "dismissal of the reality of alienation". On both he asks you to find an opportunity of a further public statement which will ease the political difficulty in which he finds himself at home.

3. We recommend that you should send a message in reply as soon as possible, and in any case before you meet Dr FitzGerald at the European Council on 3 December.

--- 4. The draft message which I attach envisages that you would tell the Taoiseach that you would seek an opportunity of publicly restating the Government's position on these two points. This could most conveniently be done by means of a Written Answer to a Parliamentary Question (which someone like Mr Michael Mates MP might be asked to put down). I attach a draft of the sort of answer which we think that you might be able to give.

5. As to the Forum Report, we think that you can reasonably say to the Taoiseach that, when you are asked a direct question about the three "models" (a unitary state, a federal state, joint authority), you are bound to make it clear that none of them is acceptable to us. Clearly none

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SECRET AND PERSONAL

No
cont'd

of them is consistent with the constitutional status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom, which the majority of the people of Northern Ireland do not want to change. Nonetheless, you recognise that the Forum Report not only acknowledged the validity of the unionist identity and the legitimacy of unionists' rights to express that identity, but also recognised that change can come about only by freely negotiated agreement and in peace, and that the aim must be to provide lasting peace and stability. That was also the aim on which the Taoiseach and you agreed in the Chequers communique, and you can confirm that you wish to see close and continuing dialogue between the two Governments on the subjects discussed at Chequers.

6. As to "alienation", both the previous Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the present Secretary of State have made public statements acknowledging that there is a degree of alienation. The question at issue is one of degree, and perhaps of semantics. We suggest that you could say to the Taoiseach that you accept that (in his words) some of the nationalists are estranged from the system of authority, security and justice in Northern Ireland; there are also many members of the nationalist community who feel able to support the system and work within it (for instance by serving in the Northern Ireland Civil Service and in the police); and that, while both Governments must do what they can to enable those who are estranged to reconcile themselves to the system, it is unhelpful to exaggerate the degree of estrangement or to talk in terms which suggest the alienation of a whole community.

7. You could tell the Taoiseach that you regret it, if the manner in which what you said at your press conference was reported has created difficulties for him at home. You could repeat that you thought that the discussion at

Certainly
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Chequers had been constructive and valuable, and that you were committed to continuation of the dialogue. You could say that you and your colleagues were urgently considering the position in the light of the discussion at Chequers, and that we should be proposing a further Armstrong-Nally meeting shortly, when that review was completed.

8. A revised "position" paper is in preparation. I shall submit that to you and the Secretaries of State as soon as it is ready, as a basis for discussion.

9. I am sending copies of this minute and the attached drafts to the Secretaries of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and Northern Ireland.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

27 November 1984

DRAFT MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE TAOISEACH

Thank you for your letter of 22 November. I had indeed noted and appreciated the trouble you took to make sure that your presentation, both at your press conference and in the Dail, followed the lines which we had agreed together at Chequers and, as you say, I was careful to do the same at my own press conference and in the House of Commons. I share your concern that my references to the Forum Report and the situation of the minority community in Northern Ireland have been taken *to latly* out of context ~~[and I am sorry that this has created political difficulties for you at home.]~~

2. As regards the Forum Report, when I was explicitly asked at my press conference whether the British Government had ruled out the three models put forward in Chapters 6-8 of the Report, I was bound to reaffirm that none of these models is acceptable to us. There was nothing new in that: it was made clear by Jim Prior in his speech in the House of Commons on 2 July, and I reaffirmed it to you when we met in London at the beginning of September. If I had been asked for my view on the Forum Report as a whole, I should certainly have endorsed Jim Prior's references to those elements in the Report which we found helpful: ~~[to its acknowledgement of the unionist identity and the legitimacy of the unionists' right to express that identity; to its condemnation of violence and its insistence that change can come about only by freely negotiated agreement and in peace; and to its recognition that the aim must be to provide lasting peace and stability in Northern Ireland, which is the aim to which we jointly committed ourselves in the Chequers communique.]~~ I ~~should also have wanted to~~ acknowledge how much personal effort and commitment you yourself have put into the search for an

acceptable way forward. (I do not at all dismiss or underrate the efforts made in the Report to identify common ground between nationalist and unionist opinion and to approach the problems of Northern Ireland in a new and constructive spirit.)

3. As to alienation, you will know from our talks both in London and at Chequers that I think that the unqualified use of this term, ~~with its Marxist overtones~~ is liable to exacerbate the problem which it purports to describe. (I also believe that ~~the extent of the problem can be exaggerated~~.) There is a danger that people will overlook the measures which British Governments have taken in Northern Ireland in recent years to safeguard the rights of both communities, and the extent to which members of the nationalist minority are involved in the institutions of the province. But I do not dispute that, though many members of the minority community support the existing system and work within it - for instance as members of the Northern Ireland Civil Service ~~or the police, there are also~~ ^{and in other parts of the public service, - some} many members of the minority community in Northern Ireland who ~~feel estranged from~~ ^{walk more to the Republic} the system of authority, security and justice there; ~~and that,~~ ^{and there is less the problem} as Jim Prior said in the House of Commons on 2 July, the

violence of recent years has deepened suspicions and mistrust in both communities.] That is the situation which both of us are ^{trying} struggling to find a way of improving. ^{to resolve. I hope you will understand the difficulty for us of having a summary which}

4. [In the light of your letter, I shall be looking for an early opportunity of publicly stating my views on these points.

Meanwhile] I want you to know that I fully share your own conviction that our joint search for ways of promoting lasting peace and stability in Northern Ireland must continue. Neither of us, I think, underestimates the difficulties; but I thought that our talks at Chequers were ^{very} valuable in helping to ^{clarify} ~~clarify~~ the problems ^{realistically} and the goodwill between us is a solid foundation on which to build. For our part, we are reflecting carefully on the ground covered in the Chequers talks and I hope

that we shall be able before long to let you have an indication of the areas which we believe that it would be fruitful to explore further with you. ~~If you agree, I think that initially this might best be done, as before, in contacts between Robert Armstrong and Dermot Nally. I should like to assure you that Geoffrey Howe, Douglas Hurd and I will be taking a close personal interest in the continuing discussions between our two Governments over the coming months.~~

I ~~also hope to~~ see John Hume fairly soon, although his remarks both in and outside Parliament have ~~not~~ been ~~at all~~ ^{surprisingly} unhelpful.

I look forward to seeing you at the European Council.



DRAFT PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION AND ANSWER

Q. To ask the Prime Minister, in the light of the meeting with the Taoiseach on 18 and 19 November, what is the Government's position on the Report of the New Ireland Forum.

A. The Forum was dominated by parties committed to an Irish nationalist viewpoint. It was thus ~~inevitable~~ ^{to be expected} that there would be much in its Report which the British Government would find unacceptable.

At the same time the Report is positive in its acknowledgement, from a predominantly nationalist viewpoint, of the validity of the unionist identity and the legitimacy of the unionists' right to express that identity; in its efforts to identify common ground between unionist and nationalist opinion; in its condemnation of violence as an instrument for bringing about political change; in its insistence that change can come about only by freely negotiated agreement and in peace; and in its emphasis on the need for lasting peace and stability. In these respects the Report was a helpful element in the background to the full and constructive discussions which the Taoiseach and I had at Chequers on 18 and 19 November and will continue to be taken into account in the close and continuing dialogue between the two Governments which we agreed should follow the meeting.

In its later chapters, the Forum Report identified three possible models for a change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. As my Rt Hon Friend the Member for Waveney, then the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, made clear in his speech in the House on 2 July last, none of those models is acceptable to the British Government. None of them would be compatible with the constitutional status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom which a majority of the people of



Northern Ireland wish to preserve. The Forum Report is however careful to leave room for other views.

We understand the emphasis placed in the Report on the need to reconcile the minority community in Northern Ireland to the system of government and authority there. It is important to remember that many members of that community [support the system and] work positively with or within ^{the system} it, for instance as members of the Northern Ireland Civil Service. Nonetheless, we recognise that there are many other members of that community who for historical or other reasons do not feel able to identify with many aspects of government or with the forces of law and order there. That is a problem which both the British and the Irish Governments are committed to seeking to alleviate.

conqueror

Ireland

PT 7



Mtgs with

TAOIS EACH

COMPTROLLER