

PRIME MINISTER

Ireland: Letter to Dr FitzGerald

I have consulted Douglas Hurd, Geoffrey Howe and Robert Armstrong on your revised letter to Dr FitzGerald. All three think it worth sending. Douglas Hurd has proposed some minor amendments (marked). All three think it better to leave out the reference to John Hume.

You will also wish to see the further effort mounted by Dr FitzGerald to calm things down by sending Lillis over here. His main concern appears to be not to muddy 'his' European Council. I doubt that you will think this a strong enough reason to change your mind on a statement.

CDD

*Revised - with
D.H.'s changes mb*

28 November 1984

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 and in other parts of the public service - there are ~~some~~ members of the minority community in Northern Ireland who look more to the Republic, and therein lies the problem which both of us are trying to resolve.

I share your own conviction that our joint search for ways of promoting lasting peace and stability in Northern Ireland must continue. Neither of us underestimates the difficulties; but I thought that our talks at Chequers were valuable in helping to approach 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.

I may see John Hume fairly soon, although his remarks both in and outside Parliament have been singularly unhelpful.

I look forward to seeing you at the European Council.

* RTA wishes to amend:

"... minority community in Northern Ireland who do not have confidence in the system of authority and law and order and who look to the Republic..."

Dr. Garret FitzGerald, TD.

SECRET AND PERSONAL

Sir Robert Armstrong

From A.D.S. Goodall

Date 28 November, 1984.

cc Private Secretary
Mr. Powell, No. 10
Mr. Andrew, NIO

ANGLO/IRISH RELATIONS: NORTHERN IRELAND

Mr. Lillis telephoned me last night at home to say that he wished to see me urgently on the Taoiseach's instructions. He came over by the first flight this morning and saw me at 10 a.m. He will be calling on you later today and hopes also to see Mr. R. Andrew.

2. Mr. Lillis gave me a frank account of the political situation in Dublin. He said that the Taoiseach's political standing and authority had been significantly weakened. He was not predicting his early departure but was anxious that we should understand that the tidal wave of criticism of his handling of the Summit and his alleged inability to stand up to the Prime Minister or achieve any definite results have been the worse thing that had happened to him since he became Taoiseach. The Irish Government were extremely anxious that the Dublin Summit should not provide a further focus for Anglo/Irish differences.

3. Irish Ministers were doing their best to calm things down and were strongly committed to continuing the discussions between the two governments agreed on at Chequers. They hoped that you would be authorised to resume talks on the Armstrong/Nally channel if possible before Christmas. I assured Mr. Lillis that the British Government regretted the political storm which the Taoiseach had encountered in Dublin and that British Ministers too were committed to continuing the dialogue.

4. Mr. Lillis said that the Taoiseach wanted the Prime Minister to know that he was fully aware that the Prime Minister had not had any intention of creating political difficulties for him and that her handling of the press conference and of subsequent Parliamentary Questions had been entirely consistent with what had been agreed between them at Chequers. He had meant to put this into his personal message to her. The Irish Government did however feel resentful about Mr. Hurd's press conference which had disclosed matters discussed confidentially at the Summit and presented them in a way which accorded the Irish Government the most minimal role possible. From an Irish perspective these remarks appeared to have been designed to cause the Irish Government embarrassment and they had certainly done so. What had fuelled the anger of Irish public opinion more than anything else had been the triumphalist reaction of the unionists and the impression created that the British Government was not prepared to contemplate any action in Northern Ireland which did not have unionist approval and support.

SECRET AND PERSONAL

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Prime Minister 2
An olive branch -
of a sort.
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20/11

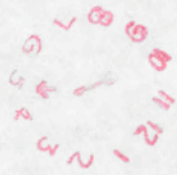
5. Mr Lillis repeatedly stressed the Taoiseach's personal conviction of the Prime Minister's good faith. He said that the Taoiseach had searched his memory of the Fine Gael party meeting and was sure that he had not actually used the phrase attributed to him. But he badly needed some help from the British side if his political position was not to be irretrievably damaged. In addition to points made in his letter to the Prime Minister, it would be helpful if the Prime Minister could find some way of indicating that she had some understanding and sympathy for the position of the constitutional nationalists in Northern Ireland and wanted to find some way of accommodating their concerns within a Northern Ireland which remained part of the United Kingdom. This would help to offset the impression in Ireland that the Prime Minister was 100% on the side of the Unionists in everything.

6. Reverting to the Dublin European Council Mr Lillis said that he hoped that both the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach could be advised to refrain from making any comment at their press conferences on any conversations they might have about Northern Ireland and Anglo-Irish bilateral relations.

I undertook to report these points to you as soon as possible.

David Goodall

A D S Goodall



28 NOV 1984

