

SUBJECT  
CC MASTER

*File*

*de Sir R. Crookall*  
*W*



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

3 December, 1985.

*Dear Jim,*

Prime Minister's meeting with the Taoiseach at the Kirchberg  
Conference Centre, Luxembourg, on Tuesday, 3 December, 1985  
at 0830

The Prime Minister had a meeting with the Taoiseach in Luxembourg this morning. Dr. Fitzgerald was accompanied by Mr. Nally.

After some introductory exchanges about the business of the European Council, the Prime Minister said that she was very worried about the reaction of Unionists to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. To put it in a nutshell, the Taoiseach had all the glory and she had all the problems. The Unionists' reception of the Agreement had been much worse than expected. It appeared that Dr. Paisley genuinely represented the feelings of the whole Unionist community. The by-elections in Northern Ireland would inevitably be portrayed as a massive vote against the Agreement. It was vital therefore to begin to show some concrete results from the Agreement as soon as possible. These were needed in three areas: security cooperation, Irish accession to the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, and practical steps by the SDLP which would enable discussions to start about devolution. She could not emphasise strongly enough the importance of demonstrating to the Unionist community that the Agreement would produce real benefits for them.

Dr. Fitzgerald said that it was essential for the two Governments to go ahead as planned with the implementation of the Agreement so that the wilder spirits among the Unionists did not think that they could blow either government off course by threats. He agreed on the need to try to detach moderate Unionist opinion from the extreme positions staked out by the Unionist political leaders. He thought the first signs of a more reasonable approach by moderate Unionists were becoming visible. Certainly he had been working hard to encourage this. He noted what the Prime Minister had said about the importance of practical results, and thought that his Government could help on all three points. If there were to be early results on the security front in terms of arrests of PIRA suspects, then the Republic must be provided with evidence. He found it hard to believe there was not evidence available in the

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North which could be used by the Gardai to make arrests. As regards the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, he was seeking further legal advice as to whether it would be possible for the Republic to sign the Convention straight away, and legislate only thereafter. He recognised that it would have a helpful effect on Unionist opinion if the Republic were able to act in this way. He would also speak to John Hume. The Unionists did not believe the SDLP wanted devolution. This was quite wrong. He would never have gone into the Agreement unless he believed that the SDLP were serious about devolution.

The Prime Minister said this was all helpful so far as it went, but she had to stress against the need for early action. She herself saw no sign that moderate Unionists were prepared to speak up in support of the Agreement. She very much hoped that the Republic would sign the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism before the by-elections in January. She wondered whether Dr. Fitzgerald might even find it possible to say in a speech, that if the Agreement worked well in practice, his Government would be prepared to consider whether Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution might be modified. Dr. Fitzgerald indicated that this would be difficult (but did not rule it out). In general, he thought that it was going to be a longer haul than either he or the Prime Minister expected to calm down Unionist opinion, though he was sceptical whether they would succeed in organising strikes and other forms of protest. In that respect the situation was better than in 1974. The Prime Minister agreed with this last point. The Agreement had avoided power-sharing or a Council of Ireland which would have been obvious targets for the Unionists to bring down. But the fact remained that the Unionists were deeply upset and charging her with betrayal and treachery. It would be necessary to repeat over and over again that the Agreement was limited and would lead to no change in the status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority.

The Prime Minister referred to the acute security difficulties which would surround the early meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference. She thought it might well be necessary for the first meeting to be in Aldergrove or London. It was important that both Governments should be guided by expert security advice. Dr. Fitzgerald said that the first meeting should go ahead as planned.

Dr. Fitzgerald said that he hoped the by-elections would demonstrate some shift in views in Northern Ireland. For instance, the SDLP had a good chance of winning in Armagh though change was less likely in South Down. The big risk was in mid Ulster where Sinn Fein had done well in the last elections, and the minority community might vote tactically for them.

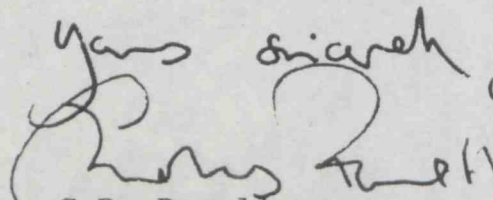
The Prime Minister said that she was grateful for the care that Dr. Fitzgerald had exercised in his own speeches to avoid anything which would be provocative to the Unionists, and indeed for the reassurance which he had gone out of his way to provide in television interviews and newspaper articles. Her particular worry remained that the IRA would stage some spectacular terrorist act which would further inflame the opinion in Northern Ireland against the Agreement. Dr. Fitzgerald said that his information was that the IRA were under-financed and under-armed. Their financial support from the United States had been reduced to a trickle. The best way forward to weaken the IRA would be to work through the families of IRA prisoners. He noted that the Northern Ireland Secretary had not used some of the wording which had been agreed about prisoners during the House of Commons debate. The Prime Minister said that it would have been dynamite - indeed nuclear - to have done so.

The Prime Minister said that we would need to work out the arrangements for consulting Unionist opinion about matters which were considered by the Intergovernmental Conference. We would also have to find a means to keep Parliament informed of the Conference's work. Dr. Fitzgerald pointed out the potential dangers of this. The Prime Minister said that no decision had been reached on how to inform Parliament. It might be better to have regular reports, but not link them directly to meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference.

Dr. Fitzgerald said he was convinced that the worst of the Unionist reaction was being experienced now. If both Governments worked at it together he believed that they could reassure the Unionists. He thought that genuine Unionists would eventually realise that Dr. Paisley was trying to lead the Unionist community in a false direction. The Prime Minister said that she could only reiterate that this would require early and visible results from the Agreement.

At the end of the meeting the enclosed Press Statement was agreed.

I am sending copies of this letter and its enclosure to Len Appleyard (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours sincerely,*  
  
C.D. Powell

Jim Daniell, Esq.,  
Northern Ireland Office.

Meeting between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach:  
Press Statement

The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach reviewed the position following the signature of the Anglo/Irish Agreement.

They confirmed that the Agreement would be implemented as planned. They recognised the concern about the Agreement among the Unionist Community. They hoped that the Community would come to understand the reassurance on the status of Northern Ireland and other matters which the Agreement offers.