

PRIME MINISTER

CC MR. INGHAM

MEETING WITH NORTHERN IRELAND CHURCH LEADERS

YOU ARE TO SEE NORTHERN IRELAND PRESBYTERIAN AND METHODIST CHURCH LEADERS TOMORROW (THE CHURCH OF IRELAND WANT TO COME SEPARATELY). THOSE ATTENDING WILL BE:

- (A) DR. DICKINSON, MODERATOR } PRESBYTERIAN
REV. SIMPSON, GENERAL SECRETARY } CHURCH
- (B) REV. SKILLEN, PRESIDENT } METHODIST
REV. EYRE, SECRETARY } CHURCH

THE PRESBYTERIANS ARE MUCH MORE OUTSPOKEN OPPONENTS OF THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT THAN THE METHODISTS (INDEED MR. KING DESCRIBES DR. DICKINSON AS 'WORSE THAN PAISLEY').

THE ATTACHED BRIEFING FOLDER CONTAINS:

- (A) A DRAFT OPENING STATEMENT. THIS WILL NEED TO BE BROUGHT UP TO DATE WHEN WE HAVE THE RESULTS OF TODAY'S FIRST MEETING OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE;
- (B) A NOTE OF DR. DICKINSON'S LETTER TO MR. KING SETTING OUT HIS REACTIONS TO THE AGREEMENT;
- (C) THE MORE MODERATE AND BALANCED STATEMENT ON THE AGREEMENT MADE BY THE METHODIST COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WELFARE;
- (D) PERSONALITY NOTES ON THOSE TAKING PART; AND
- (E) A COPY OF THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT.

YOUR PURPOSE SHOULD, I THINK, BE TO MAKE THEM FEEL THEY HAVE HAD A FAIR HEARING; TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO REMEMBER THEIR CHRISTIAN DUTY TO URGE THEIR CONGREGATIONS TO ACT PEACEFULLY

AND RESPONSIBLY; TO LEAD THEM (AT LEAST IN THE CASE OF THE PRESBYTERIANS) TO GIVE A FAIRER HEARING TO THE CASE FOR THE AGREEMENT AND TO SEE HOW IT WORKS OUT IN PRACTICE; AND TO CONVINCEN THEM THAT THERE IS NO DOUBT OF HMG'S DESIRE TO SEE NORTHERN IRELAND REMAIN PART OF THE UNITED KINGDOM.

C.D.P.

(C. D. POWELL)
11 DECEMBER 1985

EL3ATL

CONFIDENTIAL

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

CC BUP



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

WHITEHALL

LONDON SW1A 2AZ

em

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

11th December 1985

Dear Charles,

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH NORTHERN IRELAND CHURCH LEADERS

The Prime Minister is to meet the leaders of the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in Ireland on 12 December, the day after the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference. Discussion will almost certainly be exclusively about the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and the meeting the previous day. The Prime Minister is already well briefed on the Agreement but we have looked at the arguments which the Presbyterians in particular have put forward and have produced a speaking note for the Prime Minister's use; and defensive notes on the points which we know from correspondence the Presbyterians (who incline to be hostile to the Agreement) may raise. I also attach notes describing both those who are to attend the meeting and the reactions of the two churches to the Agreement. I shall also ensure you receive a copy of the Press statement issued after the first Intergovernmental Conference meeting.

The briefing assumes that the meeting of the Conference will proceed as we envisaged. It may well need to be updated.

I am copying this letter to Len Appleyard and Michael Stark.

Yours sincerely
Neil Ward,

N D WARD

KL

CONFIDENTIAL

.R.

SPEAKING NOTE FOR USE WITH LEADERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN AND METHODIST CHURCHES IN IRELAND

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to you as representatives of a larger portion of Protestants in Northern Ireland. I am particularly pleased that you have urged your members to remain calm and act as responsible citizens within the law, avoiding violence or the threat of violence.

The Agreement

The Government has entered into the Agreement because it believes it is an opportunity to make progress towards the greater peace and stability that we all wish for Northern Ireland. There are three features of the Agreement which we hope contribute to that end:

- a) First both Governments have agreed that there will be no change in the present status of Northern Ireland without the freely given consent of the majority of its inhabitants; and both Governments recognise that such consent does not at present exist. This commitment is contained for the first time in a binding international Agreement. This is the most formal commitment by the Republic to the principle of consent and should be welcomed by Unionists in Northern Ireland. We have also made it clear, that as long as a majority in Northern Ireland wish to remain in the United Kingdom, we want them to remain.
- b) Second the Agreement provides for enhanced security co-operation. It should deepen the co-operation we already receive from the Irish by extending it into the areas set out in the Agreement: joint threat assessments, exchange of information, liaison structures, technical co-operation, training of personnel and operational resources. These developments should over time enable us to develop a more coherent joint strategy against cross-border terrorism.

- c) Third by listening to Irish Government views on those matters of particular concern to the Minority we hope that they will be able to give greater support to the institutions of Northern Ireland. We also hope it will lead to greater reconciliation between the two communities in Northern Ireland, if the minority view-point is seen to be taken into account. We do not in any way intend to cease paying close attention to the views of unionists which are expressed to us through many channels - not least Parliament.

The Intergovernmental Conference

The first meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference took place yesterday. It covered:

- a) the improvement of relations between the security forces and the minority
- b) ways of enhancing security co-operation
- c) the importance of public confidence in the administration of justice.
- d) economic development.

The statement issued after the meeting recorded the subjects discussed (copy to be attached) and the Secretary of State will welcome views on these matters from all responsible sections of the community.

We intend to keep both Parliament and the people of Northern Ireland informed of developments in the Conference as far as we can and wish to have their views. A Conference which was cloaked in secrecy could be damaging. But clearly certain security matters must remain confidential.

I hope you will continue to urge your members - whatever views they may have expressed - to look objectively at the Agreement and what flows from it. I hope with your help that they will come to realise the opportunity these new arrangements present for peace, stability, dialogue and reconciliation in Northern Ireland relations. As Churchmen, you have a special duty to promote the necessary spirit of good neighbourliness.

COMPREHENSIVE NOTES ON CRITICISMS OF THE AGREEMENT

- a) "The Agreement erodes the sovereignty of Westminster in Northern Ireland". Response:

The Agreement is clear that there is no derogation from the sovereignty of either United Kingdom Government or the Irish Government and that each retains responsibilities for the decisions and administration of Government within its own jurisdiction. We will continue to take the decisions in Northern Ireland and continue to be responsible to Parliament for them.

- b) "The Agreement should be put to a Referendum in Northern Ireland". Response:

We do not accept that an Agreement which affects the relationship of the United Kingdom as a whole with the Republic should be approved by one section of the population. The Agreement has rightly been approved by Parliament on behalf of the United Kingdom as a whole.

- c) "The negotiations should not have been confidential". Response:

Although the details of our negotiations were rightly kept confidential, without which they would not have succeeded, we did make clear to the people of Northern Ireland and to their political representatives the basis on which our negotiations were taking place.

- d) "The Agreement does not define the status of Northern Ireland". Response:

The position is clear. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom. What Article 1 of the Agreement does is to look to the future and set out - in a binding international Agreement what is common ground between us; that there will be no change in the present status of Northern Ireland without the freely given consent of the majority of its inhabitants; and that both Governments recognise that such consent does not at present exist.

- e) "The Agreement makes no provision for Unionist views to be represented in the Conference", Response:

We have made it clear we will continue to listen closely to Unionist views, expressed through many channels. The Conference is not an executive body - the Government will continue to take decisions.

- f) "The Agreement will not lead to devolution/It gives no incentive to the Minority to look for devolution". Response:

The Agreement makes it clear both British and Irish Governments support devolution on a basis acceptable to both sides of the community. The SDLP is willing to enter discussions. I would hope that you would provide encouragement to unionists. (Devolved matters will not be the concern of the IC).

- g) "The Agreement will only encourage terrorists." Response:

The Agreement aims ~~to~~ to enhance security co-operation and the Government remains committed to the eradication of terrorism.

By strengthening constitutional politics and increasing the readiness of the minority to accept and even support the institution of Northern Ireland, it will weaken the position of terrorists in the community.

REACTION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN AND METHODIST CHURCHES TO THE ANGLO-
IRISH AGREEMENT

Church Politics

The delegation whom the Prime Minister is to meet consists of the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Dr Robert Dickinson and his General Secretary, the Rev Tom Simpson and the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Reverend Hamilton Skillen with the Secretary of the Methodist Conference, the Rev Charles Eyre.

... Personality notes are attached.

Both the Moderator and the President are elected posts and occupied only for a year at a time. Presbyterian Moderators traditionally make public statements on issues of importance to the members of their Church and have always tended to be rather more outspoken than other Church leaders in Northern Ireland. The Methodist Church's main policy-making body on secular matters is its Council on Social Welfare which usually adopts a responsible attitude to controversial issues.

Members of the Church of Ireland hierarchy, the third major Protestant church in Northern Ireland, have declined an invitation to attend this meeting, ostensibly because of the illness of Archbishop Armstrong but in fact because of their unwillingness to join a delegation of which the Presbyterian Moderator is a member.

Reaction to the Anglo-Irish Agreement

... In a statement issued on 18 November (attached) the Government Committee of the Presbyterian Church expressed the view that the agreement was unlikely to promote peace and reconciliation, represented an erosion of Northern Ireland position within the UK, and would lead to increased anxiety at interference by the Republic of Ireland in the affairs of the North. These views were reinforced and amplified in a letter from

/...

... the Moderator to the Secretary of State (attached) in which he deplored the absence of a role for representatives of the unionist people in the Conference and alleged that the agreement would give encouragement to those who used violence to further their political aims.

There is evidence, however, that these views do not represent the entire Presbyterian Church. A letter signed by 24 Presbyterian Ministers appeared in the press on 29 November emphasising the crucial need for reconciliation and responsibility of all Christians to avoid creating fear or provoking violence. This is clearly a response to the Church's formal statement condemning the agreement and is some encouragement to the Government.

The Methodist Church has given the agreement a guarded welcome, acknowledging that it represents a serious attempt to break the political deadlock in the Province and calling on the leaders of all the constitutional parties to begin discussions towards the restoration of devolved government. Their statement expressed some anxiety that the agreement had given Dublin rather more than merely a consultative role, but nevertheless represents as moderate a reaction as may be expected from any part of the Unionist community in the immediate aftermath of the agreement, and is greatly to be welcomed.

MC → in Ben for 595.



THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND

Church House
Fisherwick Place
Belfast BT1 6DW
Telephone: (0232) 222284

From the Moderator of the General Assembly
The Right Rev. Robert Dickinson, M.A., D.D.

28th November, 1985

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Stormont Castle
BELFAST.
Dear Mr. King,



Thank you for your kind letter accompanying a copy of the Anglo-Irish Agreement of the 15th inst.

I hope to have the opportunity to discuss the Agreement and its implications with you in person at some convenient time and will not therefore take time just now to comment in detail. I must, however, say, speaking in a purely personal capacity, that having read the document carefully I find no comfort whatever in its contents, and no prospect of the accomplishment of the aims for which the Prime Minister and you yourself have said it was designed, i.e. "peace, stability and reconciliation" for the following reasons:

- (1) At no point does the Agreement define the status of Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom. Moreover, the Agreement makes its status quite different from any other part of the United Kingdom. It would appear to me therefore to be quite unconstitutional.
- (2) At no point does the Agreement make any provision for the representation of the unionist people (Protestant and Roman Catholic) in the Intergovernmental Conference, and, moreover, manifestly their interests were in no way represented by the British officials who were involved in the framing of the Agreement which set up the Conference. It would appear to me therefore to be thoroughly undemocratic and must make peace more remote.
- (3) At no point does the Agreement give the British Government (and through them the unionist people of Northern Ireland) any say or influence in the affairs of the Republic of Ireland. It would appear to me therefore to be manifestly unjust and one-sided and must make reconciliation more remote.
- (4) At no point does the Agreement require the representatives of the nationalist minority in Northern Ireland to participate in a Devolved Administration, but rather gives them every incentive not to do so since their cause and aspirations can be more effectively pursued through the Government of the Republic. It would appear to me therefore to make political stability more remote.
- (5) Since the Agreement has come about as the result of the campaign of murder and destruction of the past 16 years (and apparently particularly as the result of the Brighton bombing), there would appear to be no reason for the men of violence to be discouraged but rather to be the more convinced that with persistence they will succeed (as in Cyprus, Aden, Rhodesia, etc.). This is precisely what Gerry Adams is saying already.

No doubt you will ask what alternative to the Agreement would I suggest. It seems to me that the stated aims of the Agreement could have been achieved more readily and effectively:

- (1) By the establishment of a just and democratic form of Devolved Admin-

istration in Northern Ireland under the sovereign authority of the Westminster Parliament and totally free from an 'Irish' dimension.

(2) By the establishment of normal inter-Governmental channels of consultation and co-operation between the Westminster Government in non-devolved matters and the Northern Ireland Administration in devolved matters, on the one hand, and the Government of the Republic of Ireland on the other (e.g. security, trade, agriculture, tourism, etc.).

(3) By legislation (if such were necessary) ensuring equally just and fair rights and opportunities for all the citizens of Northern Ireland regardless of race, class or religion, on the same basis as for every other part of the United Kingdom.

(4) By the display of the same will and resolution on the part of Her Majesty's Government to defeat terrorism and the enemies of Northern Ireland as was displayed in the effort to deliver the people of the Falklands from their plight. But instead, what a travesty of everything we thought of as 'British' that having gone to war with Hitler in 1939, as with Argentina more recently, to prevent his taking possession of other people's countries against their will - a war in which Northern Ireland took its full share and paid its full price (while the Republic of Ireland actively aided Hitler and his evil purpose, as again in the case of Argentina, thereby prolonging the war and adding considerably to the suffering and loss of the British people) - the British Parliament should now, by stifling the democratic process, deliver a part of its most loyal and law-abiding people into the hands of their enemies without even giving them the opportunity of registering their dissent.

I believe, Mr. King, that the representatives of the unionist people have shown their willingness (with the right kind of assistance) to come to fair and reasonable terms with the minority in regard to a Devolved Administration provided the constitutional status of Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom was not affected or threatened by an 'Irish' dimension. Regrettably the Government has chosen another course which, it would appear can only make such an accommodation more difficult.

But since the Agreement has now been ratified by both the British and Irish Parliaments, and is the law of the land, it would seem to me that in order to minimise the dangers of what has been done, the Government, if it has any concern to demonstrate the least integrity in regard to its assertions regarding the meaning and purpose of the Agreement must:

(1) End at once and totally the secrecy which has created such dangerous fears and suspicions among the unionist majority in the Province, and make full and evident provision for the representation of the interests and concerns of the unionist people (Protestant and Roman Catholic) in every aspect of the functions of the Intergovernmental Conference.

(2) Call publicly upon the Irish Government (a) to renounce the claim to jurisdiction over Northern Ireland, (b) to display and exercise the same concern for justice and the wellbeing of the minority in the Republic of Ireland as it has done for the minority in the North, (c) to display and exercise the same concern for understanding and generosity towards the majority in the North as it has demanded for the minority, (d) to refuse to use the work of the Intergovernmental Conference in any way to exacerbate the fears and suspicions of the majority in the North or to undermine the peace and stability of the Province.

(3) Require the political representatives of the nationalist minority in Northern Ireland to respect the constitutional and democratic process,

take their places forthwith in the Northern Ireland Assembly, declare their acceptance of and support for the RUC, Security Forces and the processes of law and order, and their commitment to seek a just and reasonable form of Devolved Administration for the Province.

(4) Assist in every possible way (without threat or blackmail) the political representatives of the unionist people in Northern Ireland to seek as quickly as possible the creation of a just and reasonable form of Devolved Administration as the way to peace, stability and reconciliation in the Province and beyond.

Otherwise it will be clear that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was in fact nothing more than a conspiracy to rob the unionist people of their British heritage and to drive them against their will into a United Ireland.

I humbly acknowledge, Mr. King, that I have no more right to expect to be listened to than any other citizen. I have sought to articulate what I believe the vast majority of the unionist people feel in these days. I, nor they, have no desire to deprive those whose religion, culture or political aspirations are different from our own of any right or privilege as law-abiding citizens which we claim for ourselves. As a Christian believer I have no interest whatever in perpetuating division or resentment. I wholeheartedly desire reconciliation and have sought earnestly to effect it. As one who cherishes Protestant liberty and the democratic process I totally desire and support the establishment of "a just and democratic system of devolved government which will ensure that the legitimate interests of all sections of the community are fairly represented and their just rights equally safeguarded without endangering the position of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom". I beg of you, and the Government of which you are a member, to try to understand the degree of humiliation and despair which has been engendered in the hearts of those whose loyalty to their Queen, country and British way of life surely stands beyond question in both peace and war. Please remember above all that "righteousness exalteth a nation and sin is a reproach to any people".

With kind regards and every good wish,

Yours sincerely,

Robert D. Jimson

Copy to: The Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland

MC → *Debate for SJS*
cc Mr Brennan, Mr [unclear], Mr Ewart, Mr [unclear]



FOR ACTION TO: *SL*
TREAT OFFICIALLY
TO ACK: SENT
PLAIN RECEIPT
RECEIVING ATTENTION. 19/11

FROM: The Clerk and General Secretary

The Government Committee passed the following resolution at their meeting on Friday evening, 15th November and I have been asked to send a copy to you.

"The Government Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, having made an initial study of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, 1985, recognise that an end to violence is to be greatly sought and that peace is earnestly desired by the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland. Whether this Agreement will, in fact, achieve this end may be open to question. The Committee likewise recognise that security is a prime issue in the community and the defeat of terrorism is an immediate priority.

"They state that the aims of the Agreement, in spite of affirmations by Her Majesty's Government to the contrary, do erode the sovereignty of the Westminster Parliament in this part of the United Kingdom. As a Church which believes that their members have an inalienable right to be involved in their own Government, they affirm that in matters of such constitutional magnitude, an imposed Agreement, imposed without consultation with and the support of the majority in Northern Ireland is wrong and a denial of fundamental democratic rights. They greatly desire improved relations with their Roman Catholic neighbours and their willing involvement in the democratic process, but believe that this Agreement will lead to a consolidation of previously expressed fear and apprehension of interference by the Government of the Republic in the constitutional affairs of the United Kingdom.

"Although many will view the Agreement with justifiable misgiving, the Committee earnestly appeal to the people in our community to study the document with care. They should remain calm and act as responsible citizens within the law, avoiding violence or the threat of violence, in the critical days ahead.

"In particular as a Church they call upon our people, North and South, prayerfully to seek God's will and guidance for our land and people in the days ahead."

CHURCH HOUSE,
BELFAST, BT1 6DW

18th November, 1985

THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND

COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WELFARE

NORTHERN EXECUTIVE

RE: AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT
BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF IRELAND

The Northern Executive, Methodist Council of Social Welfare has now
had the opportunity to reflect upon and to discuss the above Agreement.
The following remarks constitute the Executive's considered response:

1.

- 1.1 We recognise that the Agreement is a serious attempt to tackle
the political impasse in which the citizens of this Province
find themselves.
- 1.2 Many of our people are understandably hurt and angry that
the Republic consulted with the SDLP throughout the deliberations
and kept it informed of their progress, while at the same
time the government of the United Kingdom ignored the
representatives of the unionist parties.
- 1.3 In the light of the sufferings of many people in Northern
Ireland and the sacrifice of so many members of the security
forces, we recognize the deep feelings of disapproval and
opposition felt by many protestant people. We affirm their
full right and obligation to voice that opposition. We are
grateful that political leaders have affirmed their intention
to do so constitutionally. Resort to arms, force or intimidation
can have no place in any strategy acceptable to followers
of Jesus Christ.

- 1.4 We deprecate in the strongest possible terms the threats of the paramilitaries addressed to those to may be called on to implement this Agreement. We would remind the paramilitaries that freedom of conscience and expression is one of the fundamental principles of Protestantism.
- 1.5 We recognise that this Agreement is likely to achieve the support of the House of Commons and widespread international support.

2. THE AGREEMENT

- 2.1 We welcome Article 1(a) i.e. the affirmation by both Governments that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland.
- 2.2 We welcome the promise of greater co-operation as set out in Articles 7 and 9 and in particular the latter 'which deals with cross-border co-operation on security'. There must be effective implementation of this undertaking without delay.
- 2.3 It is the agreed policy of the Methodist Church in Ireland, unanimously accepted by the Conference of 1985, that a solution based on the following five principles is both reasonable and valid:
- 1) No change in the link between Northern Ireland and Westminster unless a majority in Northern Ireland agrees.
 - 2) The two traditions must have a share in the responsibility of Government.
 - 3) A system of Government in which both traditions are involved and with which they can identify is an urgent necessity. The institutions of Government must reflect the two traditions. The way forward may be to seek means whereby the two traditions could achieve a common allegiance not only within Northern Ireland but also in a wider context.

- 4) All must give full support for the rule of law impartially enacted and administered.
- 5) All must denounce violence as a means towards political ends.

Hence we regret that the Agreement does not go further than Article 4(b) which states:

'It is the declared policy of the United Kingdom Government that responsibility in respect of certain matters within the powers of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland should be devolved within Northern Ireland on a basis which would secure widespread acceptance throughout the community. The Irish Government support that policy.'

The Agreement should in our view have implemented a devolved Parliament with an executive representation of both traditions and wide powers.

There is no adequate substitute for self government. We note with satisfaction that both governments have indicated their wish to see an acceptable form of devolved government in Northern Ireland. Its emergence would remove from the inter-governmental conference the right to be involved in matters which would be the responsibility of the devolved administration. We accordingly call on the leaders of the constitutional parties to engage forthwith in meaningful discussions which would give self-respect back to all Ulster men and women.

2.4 We note article 2(b) which states:

'The United Kingdom Government accept that the Irish Government will put forward views and proposals on matters relating to Northern Ireland within the field of activity of the Conference in so far as those matters are not the responsibility of a devolved administration in Northern Ireland. In the interest

of promoting peace and stability, determined efforts shall be made through the Conference to resolve any differences'

We regret that the wording of the latter sentence of this quotation has permitted the Republic's Government and the SDLP to interpret the role of the Conference as being more than consultative.

2.5 We note that the Inter-governmental Conference shall meet at Ministerial or Official level (Articles 2 and 3). If a Conference such as that proposed is to merit the confidence of the majority community, there must be provision for the voice of that community to be heard. We consequently urge:

- a) that when the Conference meets at Ministerial level there should be present as observers representatives of unionism and constitutional nationalism.
- b) that when the Conference meets at Official level, Northern Ireland civil servants should be involved.

2.6 We recognize the safeguard in article 11:

'At the end of three years from signature of this agreement, or earlier if requested by either Government, the working of the Conference shall be reviewed by the two Governments to see whether any changes in the scope and nature of its activities are desirable.'

3. THE FUTURE

3.1 We recognize that it would be wrong to call upon unionist parties to accept or work this agreement without some reciprocal action from the SDLP. The very least we would expect from them, if they sincerely wish this agreement to work, is an immediate declaration of their readiness to join in a search for an acceptable form of devolved government, to support the RUC, and to call upon members of the nationalist community to join the police.

3.2 If this response from the SDLP is unequivocally forthcoming, we would hope that Unionist politicians would strive to overcome their dislike of this Agreement - a dislike which many of us share - and, taking into account the realities of its United Kingdom Parliamentary and international support, in the interests of the people of this Province to begin to make it work. We recognize that this is asking a great deal.

4. There are matters in the Agreement whose implications and meanings are not clear to the Council. We would welcome an opportunity for representatives of our Church to seek clarification and also develop this statement in personal discussion with the Prime Minister and Secretary of State.

Enquiries with respect to this statement may be made to Rev Sydney Callaghan,
General Ministerial Secretary of the Council on Social Welfare,
telephone 669944

E.R.

RT REV DR ROBERT DICKINSON

Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Rev Dickinson took up office on 3 June 1985. From 1973 he had been Minister of Tobermore and Draperstown, and clerk of the Tyrone presbytery. Before that he was in Ebrington, Londonderry and Argyle Place, Belfast. In the early 1970s Mr Dickinson played a leading role in the West Ulster Unionist Association and had held a number of positions in the Orange institutions. He has a reputation of being an opponent of ecumenism and was one of the leading spokesmen in the campaign to bring the Presbyterian Church out of the World Council of Churches. He holds BA and MA degrees from Trinity College, Dublin and a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Queens University.

Aged 59 he is married and has three sons and one daughter (one of his sons, the Rev John Dickinson, is minister of first Killyleagh). Mr Dickinson is also editor of the magazine 'Evangelical Voice' and is an accomplished organist.

E.R.

MR THOMAS J SIMPSON

Clerk to the Presbyterian General Assembly 1985 -
Moderator Presbyterian Church in Ireland 1983-84.

Born in Ballymena in 1925. Married with two sons and one daughter.

From 1950 to 1965 he was minister to Ballykelly and chaplain of the RAF base there and a lecturer at Magee Theological College. Also during this time appointed assistant Clerk of the Assembly and in 1985 Clerk.

Mr Simpson is a cousin of Dr Robert Simpson a former Mid-Antrim MP at Stormont. He is very anxious to maintain good relations with the Government, and during his year as Moderator worked hard to develop a constructive two way relationship between the Presbyterian Church and the Secretary of State.

RT REV HAMILTON SKILLEN

President of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

Born in 1927, Rev Skillen took over the President of the Methodist Church in July 1985 and is now a Methodist Minister in Armagh. Previously, he had served for 6 years in Portadown. A conservative theologian, he is known to be reluctant to become embroiled in politics and would prefer to concentrate on the religious aspects of his new appointment. Quiet and scholarly.

E.R.

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REV CHARLES EYRE

Secretary of the Methodist Conference

President of the Methodist Church of Ireland 1982-83

Background

Born circa 1931, Mr Eyre is a Belfast man educated at Queen's University and the Methodist College. He entered the Ministry in 1947 and has served in Portadown and Londonderry and in the Carlisle Memorial Church in Belfast which closed down in 1981 due to the population movement which had taken place in North Belfast over the previous ten years. He has been Secretary of the Methodist Conference since 1977 and had the dual role of President of the Methodist Church of Ireland 1982-83.

He has a keen interest in music - he taught music at the Bloomfield Collegiate (a local girls' grammar school) for a number of years, and composed a Cantata based on the life of Abraham.

Mr Eyre is a quiet spoken, moderate and affable man.

CONFIDENTIAL

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland

We, as Moderator and Clerk of the General Assembly, welcome the opportunity to meet the Prime Minister and are grateful for her kindness.

We respect the sincerity with which the problems within Northern Ireland have been and are being tackled in spite of 16 years of terrorism; and we pay respects to those members of the British Army, including the U.D.R. and the R.U.C., who have suffered or have given their lives at the hands of terrorists and paramilitaries.

We respect also the motives that have led to the Anglo-Irish Agreement - that terrorism be defeated and that there be peace and justice for all the citizens of Northern Ireland.

As a Church we play several roles, but especially in the present situation we undertake a prophetic and a pastoral role. We must seek to challenge injustice, and to exercise a caring ministry where our people have cause to fear.

So far as we can assess the situation we are convinced that the vast majority of our Presbyterian people in the North of Ireland feel the present Anglo-Irish Agreement is unfair to them, is unduly discriminatory and they are afraid and apprehensive that their status within the United Kingdom is at risk.

Our people are seriously concerned that the secrecy that surrounded the drafting of the "Agreement" excluded the 'majority' (including the Alliance Party) from any consultative role, but did not similarly exclude the minority as represented by the S.D.L.P. They are deeply concerned that this form of secrecy will continue in the future with the exclusion of the loyalist representation from the nerve-centre of decision making. While the members of the Government of the Republic of Ireland will act as caretakers for minority interests, the interests of the 'majority' will not be similarly represented. This procedure is seen as unjust and unfair and is contrary to the best traditions of British democracy where confidence, trust and consultation are necessary ingredients.

Presbyterians are apprehensive of the degree of vagueness that exists as to the role of the representatives of the Republic of Ireland. They are afraid that almost every aspect of domestic policy, e.g., security, education, social services, etc., will be under the scrutiny of an outside power, not always sympathetic to the ethos of the majority of the Ulster people.

It is recognised that the sincere aim of those drafting the Agreement was to reconcile the minority groupings to the structures of Government. However, it is transparent that in so doing there has not been the attempt to reconcile the minority to the majority and vice versa. In fact the majority now feel alienated and ostracised from the structures of power in Northern Ireland in a new and frightening way.

The absence of gestures from the 'minority' in the form of both joining the Northern Ireland Assembly and declaring support for the Security Forces has confirmed fears that the 'Agreement' is seen by them as a step towards a United Ireland.

The greatest hurt felt by the loyalist majority is the role given to representatives of the Republic of Ireland in the administration of Northern Ireland. It is seen as an intrusion, a thorn in the flesh and something foreign and unacceptable above all grievances. This is the root cause of discontent. As a Church we find it impossible to support and justify this concept to our people.

Presbyterians as a Church, seek peace, justice and reconciliation. We wish to live at peace with our Roman Catholic fellow citizens in both parts of Ireland. We seek parity and esteem for all and a system of open democratic administration for all that will inspire trust and confidence of all fair minded and peace loving people in Ireland.

Robert Davidson Moderator
John Stewart Clerk and General Secretary

No secret
agreement

P. W. W.

POINTS RAISED BY THE ULSTER UNIONISTS

1. THE AGREEMENT DOES NOT ACTUALLY DEFINE THE PRESENT STATUS OF NORTHERN IRELAND.
2. THE ULSTER PEOPLE WERE NOT CONSULTED IN ADVANCE ABOUT THE AGREEMENT.
3. THE CHEQUERS COMMUNIQUE PROMISED THAT THE STRUCTURE AND PROCESSES OF NORTHERN IRELAND WOULD REFLECT THE TWO TRADITIONS IN WAYS ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH COMMUNITIES. THERE SHOULD THEREFORE BE A REFERENDUM.
4. PEOPLE IN ULSTER WANT TO BE GOVERNED IN THE SAME WAY AS PEOPLE IN THE REST OF THE UNITED KINGDOM. THAT'S WHAT UNION MEANS.
5. THE AGREEMENT GIVES A FOREIGN GOVERNMENT A RIGHT OF CONSULTATION WHICH IS DENIED TO THE MAJORITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND.
6. THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE WILL ALLOW THE NATIONALISTS A PRIVILEGED VOICE. IN EFFECT THEY WILL BE CONSULTED MORE FULLY THAN THE UNIONISTS.
7. THE SDLP WILL CONTINUE TO EXERCISE A VETO OVER DEVOLUTION.
8. THE IRISH GOVERNMENT ARE INCAPABLE OF DELIVERING IMPROVED SECURITY.
9. THE UNITED KINGDOM HAS IN EFFECT ACCEPTED A LEGAL OBLIGATION TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH THE REPUBLIC ON ISSUES UNDER DISCUSSION IN THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE.
10. THE AGREEMENT WILL BE USED BY A FUTURE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO WEAKEN NORTHERN IRELAND'S LINKS WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM.
11. THERE MAY BE SOME SIDE-AGREEMENTS.

Premier seeks to assure unionists

THE Prime Minister has dismissed as "untrue" claims that the Irish Republic has been given a major decision-making role in future Northern Ireland policy, and predicted a majority for the union with Gt. Britain will remain.

Mrs. Thatcher also disclosed that she views the main purpose of the London-Dublin accord as helping to achieve agreed devolution in the province — not a vehicle for unification.

In an exclusive interview, published today on Page 9, she also suggested that unionist critics could "knock out" the Intergovernmental Conference by reaching a settlement with the minority, based on acceptance of their equal status.

Even so it is clear both governments will continue to co-operate through the new body, on security and other matters, even if there is devolved government.

In a lengthy interview at Downing Street, the Prime Minister warned that direct rule could not continue forever; urged a fresh search for political agreement; hinted that a new Assembly may have to be set up; admitted she had underestimated the scale of hostility to the Hillsborough deal, and predicted the ultimate defeat of the Provisional IRA.

But her view of the function of the new Anglo-Irish body is likely to provoke

By Desmond McCartan,
London Political Correspondent

some soul-searching in the Republic.

She said the agreement had begun to alter the way the Republic viewed the treatment of the minority in Northern Ireland, but insisted the UK Government would remain fully responsible for the province.

She said she believed the Irish Government would fulfil its part of the deal, and stressed that Britain already had underlined its commitment to equality and non-discrimination in Northern Ireland.

Rights

Until the deal, she said, people in the Republic possibly had not accepted that the aspirations of nationalists could be upheld, if pursued peacefully.

"We are dealing not with facts but with perceptions — that is much more difficult to deal with than facts," she said.

The IRA's defeat depended on co-operation from the Republic, "because they believe the minority in Northern Ireland is having a reasonable say, commensurate with their standing and with their lives."

She declared: "Minorities do have rights, everyone has rights, and it should not be beyond the ambitions of the majority to live peacefully with the minority. But the majority will decide, and continue to decide, the future of Northern Ireland."

She promised that, if evidence could be found against "any named person," Britain would give it to the Republic to ensure that the IRA was tracked down.

And, in a significant declaration, Mrs. Thatcher said that most people in Northern Ireland were "quite pleased" to stay as UK citizens.

Fresh

"I would say some of the minority, and certainly if you take the minority as a Catholic minority and not a nationalist minority, then quite a lot of them would wish to stay citizens of the UK."

Urging fresh talks, Mrs. Thatcher said the SDLP should participate "with, I hope, a new reassurance for them."

But, referring to unionist fears that the Dublin deal had threatened their position, Mrs. Thatcher declared: "I can't decide the future; I can only say, if you want a future in the union, then let's make it a better future than the one you have now. Can it be that we go on as we are now forever? I doubt it."

Mrs. Thatcher, pointing towards a fresh Government effort to seek agreement, said: "It will have to be done in some way through the Government making an effort. It is a question of judging the time. It is very important to get the timing right. Quite clearly at the moment obviously, we have got the elections coming up and we have had to let the people concerned get those through."

✓
cm



Brief
replied
CSP

10 DOWNING STREET

CAROLINE

6/12

Please see the attached letter from the Northern Ireland Office recommending that the Prime Minister should see the Leaders of the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches and the Church of Ireland as soon as possible.

The Prime Minister attaches great importance to doing this and I should be grateful if you could find one hour in the diary before Christmas. Please let the Northern Ireland Office (Neil Ward) know when you have set a time.

CSP

CHARLES

1 December 1985

arranged for 1730.
on Thursday 12 Dec.
+ general Secs of
Church leaders.

CR.

CONFIDENTIAL



SPW

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

1 December 1985

Thank you for your letter of 29 November conveying the Northern Ireland Secretary's recommendation that the Prime Minister should meet the leaders of the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in Ireland and of the Church of Ireland.

The Prime Minister is ready to do this and Mrs. Ryder will be in touch shortly to propose a time.

(C. D. POWELL)

Neil Ward, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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