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TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 71 OF 7 MARCH 1983

INFO ROUTINE NIO (LONDON) (PERSONAL FOR PUS)

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS

PERSONAL FOR PUS

1. THE TAOISEACH AND HIS WIFE CAME TO LUNCH WITH US TODAY AND I HAD HALF-AN-HOUR ALONE WITH HIM AFTERWARDS. HE TOLD ME THAT HE HAD ASKED THROUGH THE IRISH EMBASSY FOR, IF POSSIBLE, AN HOUR WITH THE PRIME MINISTER SOME TIME DURING THE NEXT EUROPEAN COUNCIL. HE HAD JUST HEARD THAT ONLY 20 TO 30 MINUTES WOULD BE POSSIBLE. IN HIS SHORT PERIOD DURING HIS PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION HE HAD NOT HAD TIME TO GET TO KNOW THE PRIME MINISTER AND MUCH WANTED AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY OF DOING SO QUIETLY AND WITHOUT THE POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE OF A BILATERAL MEETING. HE HAD NOTHING SPECIFIC TO DISCUSS AND THIS WAS PRECISELY WHY HE WANTED MORE THAN 20 TO 30 MINUTES, WHICH WOULD NOT GIVE TIME FOR THEM TO HAVE A MEETING OF MINDS OR A TOUR D'HORIZON.

2. I KNOW THE PRIME MINISTER'S TIMETABLE IS VERY TIGHT. HOWEVER, I THINK THERE WOULD BE GREAT ADVANTAGE TO US IN THE FUTURE IF SHE COULD POSSIBLY EXTEND THE TIME AVAILABLE TO SAY 45 MINUTES. AT THE MOMENT WE HAVE LITTLE COMFORT TO OFFER A WELL DISPOSED IRISH GOVERNMENT ON THE NORTH AND THEY ARE DESPERATELY WORRIED ABOUT THE POSITION OF THE SDLP. IN THIS SITUATION I THINK IT WOULD BE PSYCHOLOGICALLY VERY IMPORTANT TO DR FITZGERALD IF HE COULD HAVE A LONGER TIME TO DISCUSS THINGS GENERALLY WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND TO TRY AND ESTABLISH SOME MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING. FITZGERALD SHOULD BE WITH US FOR FOUR OR FIVE YEARS AND, AS I HAVE SAID, I AM SURE THAT IF WE ACCEDE TO HIS WISHES WE WILL FIND THE GOING EASIER IN THE FUTURE.

FIGG

LIMITED

RID

PS

PS/MR HURD

PS/PUS

SIR J BULLARD

MR GOODISON

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London SW1A 2AH

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10 March 1983

S. L. A. H. - Home

cc- Mr Goodall
~~Mr Colvin~~

CABINET OFFICE
A 3289
10 MAR 1983
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 467/30

Dear John,

Meeting between the Prime Minister and
Dr Garret FitzGerald at the European Council

I enclose a report of a talk HM Ambassador Dublin had with Dr Garret FitzGerald on 7 March. As you will see Dr FitzGerald put in a plea for his meeting with the Prime Minister at the European Council to be longer than the 20-30 minutes suggested by us. Sir L Figg has commented that there would be great advantage to us in the future if the time available could be extended to, say, 45 minutes.

Although the pressures on the Prime Minister's time at the European Council are fully recognised, Mr Pym wonders whether there might not be advantage in being flexible over the time. Dr FitzGerald evidently attaches great importance to it. To fall in with his wishes should be helpful in achieving our major objective (paragraph 3 of my letter of 28 February) of ensuring that he does and says very little in connection with Northern Ireland for as long as possible. A longer meeting could also help to reduce the pressure on the Irish Government to seek an early summit meeting, before the general election.

I am sending a copy of this letter to John Lyon (Northern Ireland Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

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