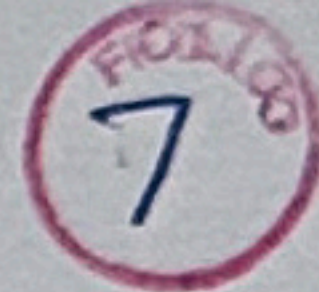




24.3.83



N 03254

MR GOODALL

cc Mr Facer
Mr Brennan
Mr Spivey

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MEETING OF ANGLO-IRISH COMMITTEE AT 11.00 am ON FRIDAY 25 MARCH 1983
Chairman's Brief

BACKGROUND

1. AI last met in March 1982, shortly after the fall of the FitzGerald Government. The Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council (AIIC) had met at official level on 20 January and at Ministerial level on 29 January 1982 and the intention was that the Official Coordinating Committee would meet in mid-February with a Summit in the spring. All these plans were scrapped with the advent of Mr Haughey and the resulting crisis in Anglo-Irish relations which followed his hostility and unhelpfulness over the Falklands war and the new Northern Ireland Assembly. Meetings have continued to take place within the AIIC framework but no attempt has been made to revive that initiative in any meaningful way.
2. In the past year then, Anglo-Irish relations have undergone many vicissitudes, most, but not all, on the negative side of the balance sheet. The time seems ripe for a stocktaking.
3. The British policy line remains as set out in Sir Robert Armstrong's minute of 13 January, endorsed by the Prime Minister on 17 January 1983. This laid down that the British Government has no interest in seeking to force the pace in improving Anglo-Irish relations, still less in trying to woo or pursue the Irish. We neither expect nor want to see any dramatic changes in Northern Ireland before the British General Election. Nevertheless, it would not be in our interests to appear to rebuff any efforts which Dr FitzGerald might make to get relations back on to a more nearly normal footing. Since that exchange of minutes, a number of important developments have taken place including:

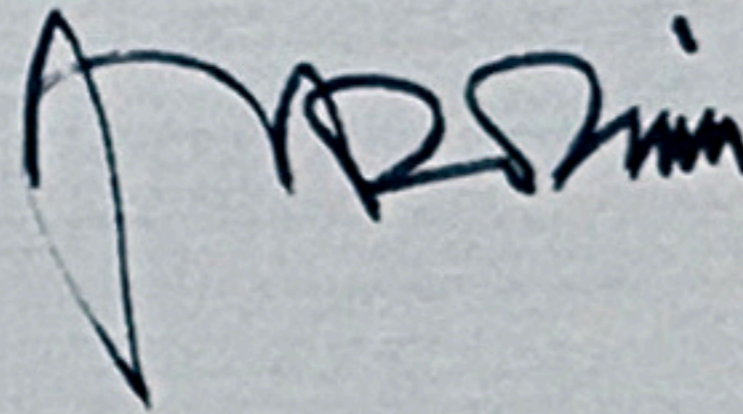
- a. the decision of the Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament to prepare a report on the political situation in Northern Ireland;
 - b. a meeting of Attorney-Generals on extradition, including the implications of the McGlinchey judgement;
 - c. Dr FitzGerald's proposal for a Forum for a New Ireland;
 - d. a bilateral between the Prime Minister and Dr FitzGerald in the margins of the European Council in Brussels on 22 March;
 - e. the Northern Ireland economic initiative.
4. This meeting of AI might therefore take stock of these (and any other) developments in order to ensure that Departments share a common view of the present state of Anglo-Irish relations and of the likely way ahead.

HANDLING

5. You may wish to draw on the foregoing in introducing the discussion. In particular you might give some account of the bilateral between the Prime Minister and Dr FitzGerald in Brussels, the record of which has not been released from Private Offices. Particular points for discussion are as follows:
- i. Is it right to assume that the AIIC (notably the idea of a meeting of the Coordinating Committee) will remain on ice until after the British Election? Does this include progress on the Encounter Organisation?
 - ii. Is it correct to regard Dr FitzGerald's proposal for a Forum for a New Ireland as a tactical ploy to upstage Mr Haughey? Or is it in our interests to appear not to rebuff it entirely (cf Sir Robert Armstrong's minute of 13 January 1983)?
6. You will wish to invite Mr Evers (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Mr Angel (Northern Ireland Office) to comment.

CONCLUSION

7. Since this is a stocktaking meeting, discussion may well be inconclusive. However, if any departure from the line in Sir Robert Armstrong's minute of 13 January is likely, it would be best to record it with some precision and clarity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D H Colvin', with a large, sweeping initial 'D'.

D H COLVIN
24 March 1983