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C. M. Goodall

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MR COLES

FILING INSTRUCTIONS

FILE No. _____

Anglo-Irish Relations: Meeting with Dr FitzGerald
at Stuttgart

15M The Prime Minister may find it helpful to have one or two comments on the advice contained in Mr Holmes's letter to you of 13 June about her forthcoming meeting with Dr FitzGerald in the margins of the Stuttgart European Council. The Irish are taking it for granted that this meeting will take place: I received a message this afternoon via the Irish Embassy from the Taoiseach's office, to say that Dr FitzGerald was hoping to discuss with the Prime Minister the implications for Anglo-Irish relations of the General Election results in Northern Ireland; and, more generally, future measures to improve Anglo-Irish relations. He is hoping for "agreement in principle" on the establishment of the Encounter Organisation.

2. I agree with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that the Prime Minister's objectives at the Stuttgart meeting should be to sound out Dr FitzGerald's thinking on the way ahead and to confirm our readiness to resume official contacts within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council. You will recall that this was in effect agreed between the Prime Minister and Dr FitzGerald when they met in Brussels on 22 March. I had therefore arranged to meet my Irish opposite number in London on 20 May but postponed the meeting when the Election was called. Mr Nally and I agreed at that time that, subject to developments, we might aim to reinstate the meeting some time in the second half of June.

3. I think it very likely that Dr FitzGerald will, as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office letter predicts, press for a full scale Anglo-Irish Summit fairly soon: I see from today's Times that the

Irish Foreign Minister, Mr Barry, has already called for a return to the system of twice yearly Summits; and this may well reflect Dr FitzGerald's own thinking. If he does press for a Summit later this year, it will clearly be difficult for the Prime Minister to turn the idea down without appearing to rebuff Dr FitzGerald's declared policy of seeking closer relations with the United Kingdom. I am inclined to agree with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that, for the reasons given in Mr Holmes' letter, it would be to our advantage to agree to a Summit in late October or early November. But if the Prime Minister prefers not to commit herself on this so soon she could perhaps ask for time for reflection and suggest that the subject should be pursued at an early meeting between senior officials.

4. As to the Encounter Organisation, I see no difficulty about going along with Dr FitzGerald's wish for agreement in principle that the Organisation should be set up, on the understanding that no announcement should be made until the details had been settled by officials. But we should disabuse him of the illusion that the British Government are committed to match the £30,000 which the Irish Government have provided in their budget for the Encounter. It was made clear in earlier discussion that there was no such provision in the British budget, and that the British Chairman of Encounter would be expected to raise the money from outside sources. That was also made clear to Sir David Orr, when he was asked to undertake the chairmanship.

5. I am making sure that Sir David Orr is still prepared to take this on.

6. If the Prime Minister is content with the foregoing I would propose to see Mr Nally in Stuttgart, before the Prime Minister meets Dr FitzGerald, in order to prepare the ground with him.

7. Copies go to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

14 June 1983

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ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Ref: B06795

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONGEncounter

No. Gov
the letter to
him by [unclear]

Sir R. Armstrong

I do not think you will want
to amend yr letter to Sir D Orr
in the light of this (copy attached at
end). (Have however held
it up temporarily, just in case
R.

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Now that the Irish have picked up the ball on Encounter by pressing for its establishment to be agreed between the Prime Minister and Dr FitzGerald at Stuttgart and by formally nominating Dr Whitaker as the Irish Chairman (see the Irish Embassy's note enclosed with the Ambassador's letter to you of 8th June), I think we need to take a closer look at the form we should like the organisation to have and how it should be launched.

2. On procedure, the last step taken appears to have been your meeting with Sir David Orr on 7th May last year. There was a somewhat inconclusive and general discussion, at the end of which it was agreed that you and Sir David Orr might consider together how to carry the work forward once the Irish side had nominated their Chairman. Presumably you will now wish to have a fairly early meeting with Sir David Orr to confirm that he is still willing to act as British Chairman and to have a more focussed discussion with him on how to proceed. But you will not be able to do this before Stuttgart: and there might in any case be advantage in waiting until we see what comes out of the Prime Minister's talks with Dr FitzGerald and your own contact with Mr Nally.
3. Meanwhile I suggest that we should be clearing our minds urgently about what we want the organisation to do. The ideas in the paper which we gave the Irish on 14th January 1982 were deliberately only tentative, in the hope of eliciting an Irish response. But that response has never been forthcoming; and it seems to me that the paper as it stands is too vague, and in places self-contradictory, to form a satisfactory basis for detailed discussion.
4. For example, a good deal of stress is laid in the paper on the comparison with Königswinter and the Franco-British Council, although both of these concentrate heavily (and Königswinter almost exclusively) on discussion of political issues. But according to the Anglo-Irish Joint Studies Report, Encounter is intended as an interim step towards the creation of an Advisory Committee on economic, social and cultural co-operation, and is to be encouraged to steer clear of political issues and concentrate on practical questions such as youth exchanges, education and co-operation between Arts Councils. Yet at

the same time its main function is stated to be "organising high level conferences on the Königswinter model". This strikes me as a recipe for muddle. The strength of Königswinter has all along been the quality of the participants it attracts from public and political life in both countries; and its attraction for them has lain in the opportunity it provides for meeting one another and discussing major political and economic issues. It is inconceivable that one could have a conference "on the Königswinter model" just to discuss youth exchanges and educational co-operation. There is in fact a fundamental choice here: we have to make up our minds whether we see Encounter as intended primarily to bring representatives of English and Irish public life together in order to promote discussion and greater mutual understanding between them, or whether its primary purpose should be to bring various sorts of expert together to advise on areas for practical co-operation. If it is to be the former, political issues cannot be excluded from its agenda. If the latter, it will be more in the business of promoting seminars on particular areas of expertise rather than holding an annual set piece conference like Königswinter. (The Franco-British Council performs both functions, but has so far held only two major conferences.) Discussion of political issues need not of course mean concentration ^{exclusively} on the problem of the North, any more than Königswinter concentrates on the bilateral Anglo-German relationship. Indeed there would be advantage from a number of points of view in engaging the Irish in a dialogue about wider political issues such as the future of the Community, East-West relations, and relations with the United States.

5. Another aspect which requires more thought is the extent to which Encounter should be independent of governments. Here again, there is some inconsistency in the United Kingdom paper of January 1982 between the emphasis placed on the importance of independence as a condition of credibility on the one hand, and the need to prevent the organisation becoming a vehicle for the promotion of ideas unacceptable to the two governments on the other. I see that there is a reference on the papers to "the Prime Minister's strictures on the involvement of Ministers on the executive board of the organisation" and to the fact that we see it as having an "essentially non-governmental character" (Mr Eyers' letter of 26th May to Mr Tatham in Dublin). If this means that the Prime Minister is against having Ministers involved in the direction of the organisation, I am sure that her instinct on this is right. I believe that the lesson of both Königswinter and the Franco-British Council is that, while governments can and must do a certain amount of pump priming (and foot most of the bill), the impetus, enthusiasm and most of the ideas must come from the independent non-governmental organisers. Unless they are prepared to devote time and energy

to the job and are given a reasonably free hand by governments to develop and pursue their own initiatives their organisations will never take off. In the case of Königswinter, the determining factor from the beginning was the enthusiasm of Dame Lilo Milchsack and her extensive personal contacts with leading political figures in Germany, especially in the SPD. The Franco-British Council (which is perhaps more closely analogous to Encounter, in that it was launched governmentally at a summit meeting between the British Prime Minister and the French President) has suffered from the lack of a comparably dynamic figure: but this has to some extent been offset by the appointment of an almost full time salaried director on the British side (Mr James Hadley). If Encounter is to get off the ground it will be important not only to find the right Chairmen but also the right person on each side at a lower level to back the Chairmen up and do most of the work. And we shall have to accept that if Encounter is to attract senior public figures from both countries it must be given the freedom to discuss and float ideas which either Government or both may find unpalatable.

6. With these questions in mind, I propose if you agree to get the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Northern Ireland Office together in order to refine our thinking about Encounter a little further and perhaps formulate some proposals for you to discuss with Sir David Orr. The way would then be prepared for the official consultations on the subject with the Irish, which we assume will follow the Prime Minister's meeting with Dr FitzGerald at Stuttgart.

David Goodall

14th June 1983

A D S GOODALL