

VR/231

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CONFIDENTIAL


URGENT
1447
① Dr Evans
② Mr Russell
11/7

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

HEAD OF THE N.I.
11 JUL 1983
CIVIL SERVICE

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1532
11 JUL 1983
MUFAX ROOM
STORMONT HOUSE ANNEX

MR HATFIELD

Anglo-Irish Relations

As I told Sir Robert Armstrong this morning, the Prime Minister is not happy with the approach proposed in his minute of 8 July for his meeting with the Irish Government Secretary, Mr Dermot Nally, in London today.

Mrs. Thatcher has commented on that minute to the effect that we have little to discuss with the Irish Government except security and European Community matters. In her view, no amount of activity relating to new committees can conceal that fact - indeed it only reveals it more starkly. She has added that it is activity of this kind that gets HMG into difficult situations with the Unionists. Finally, Mrs. Thatcher has expressed doubt as to whether the fact that there is an established dialogue between Dublin and London on relatively uncontentious subjects will give a lower profile to the report of the Forum for a New Ireland.

I am copying this minute to Mr Fall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Mr Lyon (Northern Ireland Office) and Mr. Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

③ Sept case

- ① MR Hill
- ② CC
- 1 - PS/SJS (CB)
- 1 - PS/MR Scott (LWS)
- 1 - PS/PUS (LWS)
- 1 - PS/SR E. Bell

- Mr Angel
- 1 - MR Doyle Dittmas
- 1 - MR Marshall
- 1 - MR Buxton
- 1 - MR Reeve
- 1 - MR Potts Smith

11 July 1983

MR Brennan

SR 1237
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30 - 8 JUL 1983

PREVA 883/2015 CE

PRIME MINISTER

P/W

GEM/4
Mr Russell

178/7

Anglo-Irish Relations

When you met Dr FitzGerald in Stuttgart on 19 June, you agreed to look at possible dates for an Anglo-Irish Summit in the autumn, before the Forum for a New Ireland reports at the end of the year. We need therefore to consider how to manage Anglo-Irish relations between now and the Summit, and the position which you would like to have reached by the time it takes place. As I think you know, I am due to meet the Irish Government Secretary, Mr Dermot Nally, in London next Monday, 11 July. He and I have agreed that the purpose of our meeting should be to discuss plans for future meetings in the context of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council (AIIC) at various levels, including meetings at the Summit, and to carry further our discussions of the proposed Encounter organisation. You have authorised me to propose the date of 7 November for the next Summit.

2. What follows has been agreed with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

3. With the British General Election over, Anglo-Irish relations have entered a new phase, and some intensification of the contacts between the two Governments is both necessary and desirable. For the first time for years neither the Irish nor the British Government faces the prospect of an early election; and the Government in Dublin is committed to seeking a closer relationship with London both as an end in itself and as a means of easing tension and making progress on the Northern Ireland question. On the British side, no major initiative or change of direction is contemplated in our Northern Ireland policy, the latest authoritative statement of which was the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's speech of 28 June to the Northern Ireland Assembly. On the Irish side, interest in the Northern question is focussed for the moment on the Forum for a New Ireland, which is due to report at the end of the year; but the Irish Government is anxious to be able to demonstrate in the meantime that

relations with London are developing positively. This is also the United Kingdom's interest: the Forum's report, when it emerges, may well be unwelcome to us and could have an unsettling effect in the North. It will help to give it a lower profile if there is already an established dialogue between Dublin and London on other, less contentious, subjects we also need to bear American sensitivities in mind: a closer and developing relationship between Dublin and London will make it easier for the United States Administration to stick to its policy of non-involvement - particularly important in a pre-election period.

4. Given that neither side, at least for the moment, has substantive proposals to make, it would seem that the right course now would be to agree with the Irish on a measured resumption of business within the framework of the AIIC on the basis of the Joint Memorandum (attached) which was agreed on 20 January 1982 but which, because of the subsequent deterioration in relations, was in effect put into cold storage. Although there have since then been bilateral meetings of Ministers which have been treated as being within the AIIC framework, there has been no Summit, and none of the meetings of officials foreseen in the Memorandum has taken place: neither the Steering Committee nor the Co-ordinating Committee has met.

5. My meeting with Mr Nally on 11 July will constitute the first meeting of the Steering Committee since January 1982. It would, I think, be logical for it to be followed fairly soon by an initial meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee. This is the group of officials which, within the AIIC structure, has the task of supervising and co-ordinating co-operation in all areas of common interest and concern and also with preparing meetings of Ministers as necessary. Although the Irish wanted this to be, formally speaking, a single body, they deferred to our wish that it should meet under three different aspects to deal with economic, cultural and security matters and that each side could field a different team depending on the subject matter under discussion. Mr Nally and I could perhaps agree that this Committee should meet as appropriate between now and November to take stock of our bilateral relations under each of these

headings and measure progress against the possibilities for practical co-operation identified in the Joint Studies Report; and that it should be mandated to report its findings to the two Heads of Government for consideration at the Summit. You and Dr FitzGerald could then formally authorise whatever further work - possibly including meetings of one or two specialist working parties - the Co-ordinating Committee might have recommended.

6. The other item I shall be discussing with Mr Nally is the setting up of Encounter. This has already been agreed in principle: but it remains to work out the details. There are several difficult issues here including finance, administration and the relationship of the new organisation to the British Irish Association, and I am not certain that Mr Nally and I will be able to reach agreement on all these points on 11 July. But we should certainly be able to demonstrate sufficient seriousness of intent to satisfy the Irish desire for progress.

7. All this should, I believe, be enough to enable both sides to demonstrate that mutual confidence has been restored between Dublin and London and that momentum is returning to the development of bilateral relations, without unjustified fears or expectations being raised on either side. It should at the same time provide a reasonable slice of bilateral business for you and Dr FitzGerald to discuss at the Summit, without carrying any constitutional implications or committing us to any departure from our current policies.

8. If you are content that we should proceed on this basis I will be guided accordingly in my talks with Mr Nally.

9. I am sending copies of this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and to the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland and for Defence.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

8 July 1983

Joint Memorandum on the Anglo-Irish

Intergovernmental Council

1. The joint communiqué of 6 November, 1981 recorded that "recognising the unique character of the relationship between the two countries, the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach have decided to establish an Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council through which institutional expression can be given to that relationship between the two Governments. This will involve regular meetings between the two Governments at Ministerial and official levels to discuss matters of common concern".

2. It will be a basic purpose of the Council to contribute to the achievement of peace, reconciliation and stability and to the improvement of relations between the peoples of the two countries. Within the framework of the Council there will be the closest bilateral consultation at Ministerial or official level, as appropriate, on matters relating to these purposes and on matters of common interest or concern.

3. Meetings of the Council may take place at two levels: Ministerial and Official.

4. Meetings at Ministerial level may involve Heads of Government, accompanied by other Ministers or not so accompanied; or one or more other Ministers on either side.

5. Meetings at Ministerial level will constitute meetings of the Council, except where one side proposes that a given meeting should not be so regarded. It is accepted that incidental meetings such as those between Ministers in the margins of meetings held in the European Community or other international organisations would not be Council meetings unless

10. The agreed records of Council meetings need normally include only the following information: date and place of meeting; participants; subjects discussed; and decisions reached. From time to time, if necessary, the texts of documents exchanged and/or agreed can be annexed. The records within each series will be identified by their date. Thus AIIC (M) 21.12.82 and AIIC (O) 6.3.83 would be the agreed records of, respectively, a Ministerial meeting of the Council on 21 December, 1982 and an Official meeting on 6 March, 1983.

11. It is accepted that the contents of this Memorandum will be reviewed after an interval of not more than one year from the date below.

20 January 1982