

15/18

54

CONFIDENTIAL

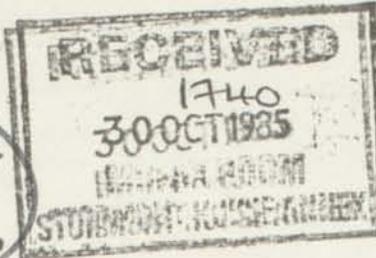


10 DOWNING STREET

① Mr Ward *AW*
 Mr Slope (B) M
 Mr Scott (L) M
 Mr (L) M
 Mr Slope *3/1 x* M
 Mr Brennan
 Mr A.W. Stephens M
 Mr Chesterton
 Mr Bell

6
794/110
AISK.

From the Private Secretary



30 October 1985
 Miss Elliott
 Mr Elliott M
 Mr Sherman ✓

③ s/s to see (The Wilson Declaration Appendix 6-11 attached) *AW*

NORTHERN IRELAND: CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER BY
THE RT. HON. JAMES MOLYNEUX M.P. AND
THE REVEREND IAN PAISLEY M.P.

The Prime Minister saw Mr Molyneux and Dr Paisley for nearly an hour this morning. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was also present. Both visitors seemed to me intent on displaying restraint and moderation in their remarks, in contrast to their subsequent press conference. The enclosed note which they left with the Prime Minister at the end of the meeting - Fair Play for Northern Ireland - purports to set out the points they made. In practice the tone of the meeting was much less sharp.

Mr Molyneux opened by saying that in his judgment there had been a significant change since their last meeting with the Prime Minister in the background against which the Government's negotiations with the Republic were being conducted. It was now clear that the prospect of improved security cooperation was a chimera. The Irish side, whatever their intentions, would not be able to deliver on any commitments they made. This had been borne out not only by Sir John Hermon's comments but by remarks by the Irish Ambassador in London to the effect that the Garda and Irish Army were unable even to cooperate among themselves. Dr Paisley added that if the Republic were a civilised government, it would offer such improved cooperation without seeking any quid pro quo. They should not ask a price for doing the decent thing. The Northern Ireland Secretary said that violence in the North was on a plateau, indeed rising slightly. The only way to make a dent in it was through improved cooperation across the border. Such cooperation existed at present but could be improved.

Mr Molyneux continued that neither his party nor Dr Paisley's wanted to see the United Kingdom and the

CONFIDENTIAL

Republic at loggerheads. Indeed they wanted closer and normal relations, so that the Irish Government would not haul the United Kingdom off to the European Court or lead the pack against us as over the Falklands. But they did not see any need to make special arrangements, within this broader move towards better relations, for six counties of the United Kingdom. Dr Paisley elaborated on this. The idea of a role for the Republic in the affairs of Northern Ireland was totally repugnant to the majority in the North. If there was to be an agreement with the Republic, people in the North should at least be consulted about it, whether by election or referendum. Northern Ireland had a special form of government and wished to preserve it. The Prime Minister said that she did not yet know whether an agreement would be reached with the Republic. If it was, it would not alter the fact that decisions about Northern Ireland would continue to be made by the United Kingdom alone (and decisions in the South by the Republic). The Assembly would of course remain, and could become the focus for devolved local government if arrangements which commanded widespread acceptance could be devised. Dr Paisley said that there was no reason to introduce the Republic into Northern Ireland's government, particularly when it had designs on the territory of Northern Ireland. So far as the Assembly was concerned, proposals would shortly be reaching the Government. The Prime Minister said that she did not see progress towards devolved local government as an alternative to agreement with the Republic but as complementary to it.

Mr Molyneaux said that people in the North were particularly worried about reports of a consultative role for the Republic. This would not be consistent with the guarantees given in the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973. Moreover, if whatever arrangement might be reached with the Republic had the status of an international agreement, there was always the risk that the Republic would claim that it had not been fully consulted about a particular decision of the Northern Ireland Secretary, or that its views had not been adequately taken into account. He recalled Appendix 6 to the Joint Declaration of 1969 (copy enclosed) under which the United Kingdom Government affirmed that responsibility for affairs in Northern Ireland was entirely a matter of domestic jurisdiction. He thought this might strengthen the Government's hand in negotiations with the Republic. The Prime Minister repeated that no agreement would affect HMG's responsibility for decisions in the North. But she would look closely again at the draft texts being discussed with the Republic to make sure that nothing would be conceded which conflicted with the Government's statutory obligations.

Dr Paisley said that people in the North were being unsettled by statements about the negotiations being made by

politicians in the South. He and Mr Molyneux did not want a confrontation with the Government. There were signs at long last of an economic dawn in the North and they wanted to build upon it. But the secrecy of the current negotiations inevitably aroused fears. It also reduced his credibility and that of Mr Molyneux when John Hume was kept fully briefed by the Republic while they were told nothing. The Prime Minister said that she had hoped her remarks at her press conference following the Chequers Summit had provided all the reassurance which people in the North required. She stood by everything she had said then, and it was on this basis that discussions with the Republic were proceeding. The Northern Ireland Secretary acknowledged the difficulty for the Unionist leaders: but there had to be strict confidentiality about negotiations between sovereign governments. All the Government could do was repeat the pledges and the assurances which they had given. An agreement with the Republic would not be a slippery slope. Dr Paisley said that the Prime Minister's statements gave hope and comfort to people in the North. But if something were to happen which looked like a sell-out, the Government would find itself dealing not any longer with him and with Mr Molyneux but with men of violence. The Prime Minister recalled that she had pledged a full debate in Parliament. Dr Paisley said that he was not aiming for anarchy or stirring people up, provided that Unionists were satisfied with the outcome.

Mr Molyneux said that both he and Dr Paisley accepted the assurances given by the Prime Minister. The problem hinged on the legal consequences of giving the Republic a consultative role. He was glad that the Prime Minister had given an undertaking to look closely at this. A consultative mechanism affecting the North alone would set Northern Ireland apart from the normal processes of consultation between sovereign governments. The Prime Minister repeated that she would look at the wording of the draft agreement closely. The Northern Ireland Secretary added that regular consultation with the Republic might help clear up the misunderstandings, often based on misinformation, which bedevilled relations with the Republic. The greater part of the work of any consultative mechanism would be in dealing with this sort of problem. If the Government were able to reach an agreement with the Republic which recognised that the border could not be changed without the consent of the majority, there could be real benefits for the North. One had to ask whether it was better to accept paralysis or seek a way through. Dr Paisley commented that the way through lay in an internal settlement in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Secretary said that the Government hoped that an agreement with the Republic would encourage, not obstruct, progress towards devolution.

The Prime Minister asked why the Sinn Fein vote in the North was increasing. Mr Molyneux said that people had the impression that the SDLP was in a rut and a spent force. The Government should urge them to concentrate on delivering the goods to their electors rather than on a high-wire act with the Dublin Government. Dr Paisley added that the SDLP could not be given a veto over devolution. And in his view the Government should look again at banning Sinn Fein.

Mr Molyneux concluded that he and Dr Paisley and their supporters did not object to the Government discussing matters of common concern with the Republic. But they should try to avoid provision for structured consultations about Northern Ireland. That was where the problem would lie. Dr Paisley handed over a note of what he and Mr Molyneux had been seeking to convey.

I enclose a transcript of the Northern Ireland Secretary's remarks to the press after the meeting.

I am copying this letter and enclosures to Len Appleyard (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

your diary.
Charles Powell

CHARLES POWELL

J A Daniell, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office

CONFIDENTIAL