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13.

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

MR GOODALL
CABINET OFFICE

NORTHERN IRELAND

Thank you for your minute of 10 February (B.06973) with which you forwarded a draft record of the meeting on 10 February.

The Prime Minister agrees that copies of your record may be sent to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Sir Antony Acland and Mr. Andrew.

E. J. COLES

13 February, 1984

SECRET & PERSONAL



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Prime Minister

SECRET AND PERSONAL

Agree that the record

should also be sent to

Mr. Ivier, Sir Geoffrey Howe,

Sir Antony Ireland and Mr.

Robert Andrew ?

B.06973

MR COLES ✓

c Sir Robert Armstrong

Northern Ireland

A.D.C. $\frac{10}{2}$

1. I submit a draft record of this morning's meeting.

2. If we follow the precedent of the record of the meeting on 4 January it would be copied only to you and to Sir Robert Armstrong. The Prime Minister may, however, consider that on this occasion copies should be sent also (on a Secret and Personal basis) to the ^{two} Secretaries of State, and to the Permanent Under Secretaries who attended the meeting.

Yes
not

David Goodall

A D S Goodall

10 February 1984

SECRET AND PERSONAL

DRAFT NOTE FOR THE RECORD

NORTHERN IRELAND

1. The Prime Minister held a meeting at 10 Downing Street on 10 February to discuss Northern Ireland. Those present were the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Sir Robert Armstrong, Sir Antony Acland, Mr Alan Goodison, Mr Robert Andrew, Sir Philip Woodfield, Mr David Goodall, Mr Robin Butler and Mr John Coles. The meeting had before it a minute by the Secretary of the Cabinet to the Prime Minister dated 7 February covering a paper by officials of the same date examining a range of proposals on Northern Ireland.

2. In discussion it was recalled that agreement had been reached in principle at a Ministerial meeting at Chequers on 4 January that a political initiative on Northern Ireland was desirable which, by helping to isolate and neutralise the terrorists and their supporters, would promote law and order in the Province and would at the same time provide the Government with a means of responding effectively to any proposals which the Irish Government might put forward following the report of the Forum for a New Ireland. Any initiative which had attractions for the nationalists was bound to evoke strong unionist opposition and to

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involve practical and political difficulties. But these should not be allowed to stand in the way of action to improve the present situation.

3. A crucial precondition for any package of measures must be the Irish Government's willingness - and ability - to deliver an acceptably formal and binding commitment to waive the Republic's territorial claim to the North and to acknowledge the union for the foreseeable future; and it was difficult to see how this could be done except by a revision of Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution. Provided the Irish Government could enter into an appropriately binding commitment of this kind, it would be feasible to consider introducing arrangements for joint policing and joint law enforcement in Northern Ireland on the lines summarised in paragraph 15 of the officials' paper. Although measures on these lines might in the short-term lead to some increase in terrorist activity, they would offer a real prospect of isolating the terrorists from the rest of the nationalist community and in the longer term ought thereby to lead to a significant improvement in the security situation. Although the SDLP in particular might be tempted to press for a revocation of the British Government's "guarantee" that Northern Ireland would not cease to be part of the United Kingdom without the consent of the majority of its inhabitants, this did not appear to be central to the Irish Government's present thinking

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nor would it be consistent with Dr Fitzgerald's apparent readiness to consider abandoning the Republic's territorial claim and to proceed only with the consent of the majority of the population of the Province.

4. Proposals for local government reform in Northern Ireland were likely to be of less interest to the Irish than proposals for joint law enforcement, but would nevertheless be worth including in any package: the most promising possibility in this field would be to give the Assembly local government powers, allocating the chairmanship of certain committees to representatives of the minority. It was agreed that although there were evident risks in making any approach however informal to the Irish Government on the lines discussed in the officials' paper, it would be necessary to explore the possibilities with them on a tentative and informal basis in order to obtain a clearer idea of what might be negotiable. Only then would it be possible to formulate detailed proposals. Provided such exploration was undertaken on the clear understanding that ~~it was predicated~~ *any agreement would be dependent* on the Irish side being willing and able to deliver a formal commitment to abandon the Republic's territorial claim and to acknowledge the union, at least for the foreseeable future, the Government's position should command a wide measure of public support. It would be desirable to ensure that Dr Fitzgerald was aware, before the Forum's report was published, that the British Government were prepared to

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approach the problem constructively; and it would therefore be appropriate to begin exploratory discussions with the Irish in the near future. In the first instance, these discussions could best be conducted on a personal and confidential basis between the Secretary of the Cabinet and the Secretary of the Irish Government, Mr Nally, who had been shown to be a trustworthy interlocutor.

5. The Prime Minister, summing up the discussion, said that the meeting agreed in principle that the proposals summarised in paragraph 15 of the officials' paper of 7 February constituted an acceptable basis from which to begin a tentative and confidential exploration of the Irish position. It would, however, be essential to have Cabinet approval for the main elements of the proposed approach before any contact was made with the Irish. She would therefore inform the Cabinet in general terms of what was proposed at its meeting on 16 February. Subject to Cabinet agreement, it would then be for the Secretary of the Cabinet to make an informal, personal and confidential approach to the Secretary of the Irish Government.

The meeting -

1. Noted that the Prime Minister would proceed as indicated in her summing up.

2. ^{Invited} ~~Invited~~ the Secretary of the Cabinet, to prepare a speaking note for the Prime Minister's use in Cabinet.

in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland,

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