

CONFIDENTIAL



bc PC JR

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

1 October 1984

See file.

MR. BARRY'S SPEECH TO THE BRITISH IRISH ASSOCIATION
15 SEPTEMBER

Thank you for your letter of 26 September enclosing a copy of Mr. Barry's speech to the annual conference of the British Irish Association.

The Prime Minister has read this with great interest.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours sincerely
C.D. Powell*

(C.D. POWELL)

Colin Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

✓ CEPC ④
Prime Minister
CDP
26/9.

26 September 1984

Dear Charles,

Mr Barry's Speech to the British Irish Association,
15 September

The Secretary of State has asked me to draw the Prime Minister's attention to Mr Barry's speech to the annual conference of the British Irish Association in Cambridge on 15 September.

The speech attracted much publicity in the Irish press. It was carefully drafted and clearly designed to raise expectations of a joint initiative by the two governments in relation to Northern Ireland - with the aim of thereby putting pressure on HMG to make a more detailed response to the Forum Report than that given by Mr Prior to the House on 2 July, and to embark on substantive negotiations with the Irish Government.

Mr Barry nevertheless welcomed Mr Prior's statement to the House, and was encouraged that Mr Hurd was to take it as his starting point (p2). He repeated that Chapter 5 was the key section of the Forum Report, together with its claim to be open to other ideas. He made a number of sharp points, but the overall impression conveyed was one of optimism about the prospects for significant improvement in the situation in the next year. The core of his message was that security measures on their own would not be enough to restore peace and stability: London and Dublin should jointly seek a political solution now. This was underlined by the statement on p10 of the speech that "... the problem of Northern Ireland (must) be given the highest priority for a sustained period both by you and us".

/ The speech

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

On Ireland
Situation: FT



The speech also contains at least two significant hints at the elements which the Irish Government would like any joint initiative to cover: Mr Prior's alleged acceptance in a press interview in July "of the right of the Irish Government to speak on behalf of the Northern nationalists" (p4), and the declaration that "we honestly cannot foresee any real improvement without a major transformation of the system of public authority in Northern Ireland" (p6). The significance of these passages will certainly not have escaped close observers of the Irish political scene, particularly when read in conjunction with Sir Nicholas Henderson's interview with Mr Prior in the last instalment of Mary Holland's televised series "The Shadow of the Gun" (broadcast on 16 September), in which Mr Prior was drawn into some speculative comment about the possibility of joint security and consultative arrangements in the Province.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours ever,
Colin Budd*

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

"Anglo-Irish Relations - The Crossroads Ahead"

Remarks by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Peter Barry TD,
at the British Irish Association Conference

Jesus College, Cambridge - 15 September 1984

Embargo: 9.00 p.m., 15 September 1984

The Irish and British Governments and peoples are now close to our most important crossroads for many years. One way or the other, our relations are about to be transformed. When your Association meets this time next year, you will be considering a new and different situation, either one in which progress has been made and continues to be made, or a situation palpably more bitter, more difficult, more unstable and more dangerous than anything we have had to face in Anglo-Irish relations in this generation.

Ranged against the possibility of progress is a daunting array of negative forces: the intense concentration in one corner of one island of the most intractable aspects of the long and difficult involvement of the two islands with one another; the fanatical determination of two sets of armed extremists to secure for themselves and for the communities for which they falsely claim to speak total victory, total supremacy; the fears and divisions among the people of Northern Ireland; and, above all, the ever-widening gap between Northern nationalists and the institutions of the state: in other words the ever-deepening alienation from the existing system of order and authority of an entire community. Other major obstacles to progress are: complacency or weary disinterest on the part of some people here in this island or, even in the case of some of those who are well-intentioned, the failure to face up to our common problems in their full dimension and thus the unwillingness to contemplate action of a sufficiently fundamental character to secure real and enduring progress.

For my part, I am hopeful that we will make such progress. I am hopeful that when you come to your deliberations in this Conference next year, you will be facing a new and, if I may say so, almost unrecognizably positive situation in Anglo-Irish relations. Because I recently expressed some optimism along these lines I was accused by one journalist of being naive and, by another, of being hysterical. So mired in despair are the assumptions of so many about our problems!

There are, however, a number of strong, new, positive factors in the situation, factors which together could well overcome even the most awesome of the obstacles that face us.

Foremost of all, is the clear recognition by the two Governments that the situation in Northern Ireland, and particularly the alienation of the minority, is so threatening to stability that action is vitally necessary to reverse the deterioration. Mr Prior made an important contribution to Anglo-Irish understanding in his speech in the Commons on the Report of the New Ireland Forum on the 2nd July when he said that a situation had been reached where it would be worse to do nothing than to take action. Mr Prior went on to acknowledge all the major ingredients of the problem of alienation in terms with which we would strongly agree. That speech was insufficiently appreciated by the media and by some political commentators. I was encouraged to read that Mr Hurd takes it as the point of departure for his own approach.

The second powerful positive factor is the Forum Report. Irish nationalism has with one voice described what we see as the unalterable realities of the situation including those realities, notably the unionist realities, which are frankly uncongenial to us. With one voice we have set out the irreducible requirements, as we believe them to be, which must be met if peace and stability are to be won. I want to emphasise here my view and that of my Government that these realities and requirements in Chapter 5 are the real core of the Report. In stating them we have not flinched from the uncongenial: we have accepted that Irish unity could come only by agreement and consent - and that means the consent of the people of the North as well as the consent of the people of the South. We went on to set out a number of possible options which might accommodate both the Realities and the Requirements of our Report, including what we naturally refer to as the preference of Irish nationalism, the unitary state. Finally, we have emphasised that we do not have closed minds: we remain open to any ideas which might lead to progress.

It took us a long time to write and agree the Report, in fact over a year. British people and Unionists should bear in mind that this was no easy task. A fairly recent generation of Irish nationalists, my political forebears and those of Garret FitzGerald and Charles Haughey, fought a horrific civil war about some of the very issues on which agreement was secured in the Forum Report. I believe all who participated in the Forum deserve credit but I believe particular credit for this remarkable achievement is due to the two Labour parties in Ireland, Dick Spring's Irish Labour Party and John Hume's SDLP.

What is even more important is that we have in the only prescriptive section of the Report, the Realities and the Requirements, set out a new nationalist agenda which is to a remarkable degree realistic, generous and flexible. Irish nationalism has now earned the right to say to the British and to the Unionists: "We have tried hard and honestly to take account of your interests and your rights. These Realities and these Requirements are our conclusions. Do you agree with them? If so, let us implement them. If not, tell us where we are wrong and let us together establish a set of conclusions which will take account of the full dimensions of this problem, as you and we see it. And let us implement those conclusions for the sake of peace and stability."

A third important positive factor is that the British Government are, I believe, trying in their own consideration of the Forum Report to take a fresh and, I hope, courageous look at this problem. The first clear signs of this were in Mr Prior's significant speech to which I have referred and, in particular, in his acceptance, shortly afterwards confirmed in an interview in the Belfast Irish News, of the right of the Irish Government to speak on behalf of the Northern nationalists.

A fourth positive factor is the fact that many Unionists too are thinking in more positive terms. I have several times welcomed the document adopted as a policy statement by the Official Unionist Party, "The Way Forward". The tone of this

document and some of its ideas - most notably those in the area of human rights - are encouraging. I have also said that it is our view that the political proposals in the document would be inadequate to reverse the problem of alienation, but I have also noted a positive openness to discussion and negotiation.

A fifth and very important factor is that we have in London, and, I believe, in Dublin, two solid Governments who will together have the time to establish a new attempt to bring peace and stability to Northern Ireland and to sustain that effort through its critical first years.

These then are the grounds for my optimism which I hope will not prove to have been either "too naive" or "too hysterical". I should say that the criticism with which I am more familiar is that I am too downright and too plain spoken! Perhaps I am. As one who does not agree with every word in every editorial about Ireland in the Daily Telegraph or indeed in some other British newspapers, I have to admit that I was favourably struck by a leader in the Telegraph written some months ago. It was written by someone whom, of course, I cannot name, but whose identity many of you, I would wager, could guess correctly. In effect, the writer advised Mrs Thatcher that, in any talk there might be about a fresh initiative, she should be brutally frank with the Irish. I do not know about the brutal bit, but personally I think that frankness is very desirable. There has not been enough frankness in Anglo-Irish relations.

At the risk of getting into trouble yet again, I hope therefore that you might allow me to conclude my remarks this evening with a few frank words.

First, to the Unionists among us. I must ask you to believe that the overwhelming majority of the people of our State feel for your suffering. We share the outrage of Ken Maginnis at the genocidal slaughter by the IRA of your people in the border areas. While we believe that major features of the security system in the North are structurally wrong, we acknowledge that that is not your fault nor indeed the fault of those in the security services. We know that every attack on police men and women and on soldiers is felt by you to be an attack on your community. We do what we can, at enormously higher cost to our people than the security system in the North is to the people of Britain, to try to help. But we honestly cannot foresee any real improvement without a major transformation of the system of public authority in Northern Ireland.

What we want to do is to help solve the problem in a way which will protect all the people of the North so that you and we in the South will start to enjoy a sense of security such as neither side in the North has ever felt. We believe that there are deep and worsening structural problems in the systems of government, politics, justice and security in Northern Ireland and that they can be crudely summed up by saying that nationalists feel that those systems do not belong to them in anything like the way that you feel that they belong to you.

In fact, "alienation" means that nationalists increasingly feel that those systems are not "theirs" in any sense whatever. I'm afraid it's no good saying, with whatever degree of sincere conviction or even outrage, that nationalists should feel otherwise. That would be like my saying that you should become nationalists. You can't and won't and nationalists in Ireland for the first time have with one voice in the Forum Report acknowledged that you feel, and have a right to feel yourselves to be British, and that you have and have a right to have, a specific set of values which you believe to be threatened. I have myself in various ways, including through the educational experience of the Forum, tried to learn about your point of view. I think I have learned a lot. I know that I have a lot still to learn. I want to continue doing so and I hope that you will help me to. Do you think it is unreasonable of me to ask you to try to understand positively the point of view of nationalists? If so, there is not much hope for any of us. If not, we all have a great deal to hope for.

I know that many of you resent the fact that I publicly raise issues which are of concern to Northern nationalists: visits to Drumadd, border incidents, plastic bullets, shootings by the security forces, remarks of judges and so on. I think I have some understanding of your reaction. But I would like to say that, quite apart from the fact that the British Government now accept the legitimacy of my Government raising these and other issues, and quite apart from my own conviction that we have a moral duty to do so, I believe that it is in the interest of

all the people of Northern Ireland that they be raised by Dublin. Any failure on my part to do so would by default legitimise the spurious pretensions of the Provisional IRA and their political henchmen who are as much my enemies as they are yours. That in the last analysis is the most fundamental thing I would ask you to accept. Let me repeat it. The IRA are my enemy just as they are yours. I want no part of the Ireland they want to bring about or the methods they use to achieve it. You who are Unionist and we who are nationalist must find a way together to ensure that neither the IRA nor the armed extremists on your side who employ similar methods will prevail. That means in the first instance finding urgently a way to end the alienation of the nationalist community in Northern Ireland on which the IRA are now feeding successfully.

Surely you must see this? The vast majority of us, North and South, want to see peace and stability at last on the island we all share. But security measures alone will not achieve this so long as there is a substantial population - the nationalists of Northern Ireland - who feel that they have been given no reason to identify with the political institutions under which they must live.

I turn now to my British friends and colleagues here. You cannot really detach yourselves and say that the crisis in Northern Ireland is the fault of its people - unionists or nationalists - and leave it at that. In face of the scale of misery and the dying of the hopes of a whole community, you in Britain simply cannot evade the fact that both in history and

today you have been and are, the governing power. One is saddened, even embarrassed, to hear intelligent British leaders blame the problem on the irrational confusion of the Catholic and Protestant Irish. Do not be surprised if we in Ireland are angered when we see this reflected in racist jibes or jokes on British television and in British tabloids. God knows both nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland and, let me say it, we in the South, all contributed our share to the tragedy of today. But Northern Ireland itself was primarily a British creation; and it is today a British responsibility. Every evasion of that fact increases the problem.

We the nationalists have tried to face our obligation through the Forum Report. Of the three main protagonists, we have made the first major move to point at least to a way out of our common dilemma. I know that it will be difficult for Unionists to make a comparable move, beleaguered as they feel themselves to be and protected as they have hitherto been by the structure of their situation, although I do not exclude that some of them may have begun to do so. But we now await the most important move by you in Britain and your Government. I must confess that just as you were impatient with our delay in producing the Forum Report, we feel a certain impatience about your deliberations. We are, as I said, quite close to that crossroads.

The problem, stated simply, should not be beyond the ingenuity of any of us. It is that London and Dublin should together provide to the people of Northern Ireland what they need, not

what we in either capital might merely prefer for ourselves. What they need, we say in the Forum Report, is that, where now only one tradition - only one identity - is accommodated, a set of structures must be established which accommodate on an equal basis the two clashing traditions and identities. That must be done in a way which all the people can experience in their daily lives. It will require that the problem of Northern Ireland be given the highest priority for a sustained period both by you and by us. Among our criteria for a solution would be that the solution be durable, transparent - that is, that there be no hidden agendas to be the focus of fear or suspicions - and that it be adequate to reverse alienation and create peace and stability for the very first time in Northern Ireland. To attempt anything short of that would be to make matters worse. We, the nationalists of Ireland, know and admire you, the people of this island, in a way which, for reasons of history, population size and media power, is not always fully reciprocated. We believe more in your capacity to solve this problem than you may do yourselves. We believe you should commit yourselves to this task now for the sake of all the people of Northern Ireland.

A final word about my own Government's role. We will be motivated in the months ahead by one sole objective: to end the suffering and misery of ordinary men, women and children. We will not be put off by meaningless ideological bombast which might be aimed at temporary political advantage at the expense

of the security and the happiness of living people. The tragedy of Northern Ireland is finally a human, more than a political, tragedy and, for myself, it would be the greatest privilege of my public life to be allowed to play a part in ending it.

Ireland: Situation P417.