

Prime Minister

NORTHERN IRELAND COMMUNIQUE

1. I am still very concerned about paragraph 5 of the revised draft Communique.
2. I think that we are making too many concessions to the Irish, are receiving too little in return, and will increase suspicions even among moderate, reasonable Unionists who want, perfectly understandably, to remain part of the United Kingdom.
3. I suggest that the second sentence in paragraph 5 should be re-drafted as follows:-

"The Prime Minister affirmed that Northern Ireland would remain an integral part of the United Kingdom unless and until the majority of the people of Northern Ireland decided otherwise. The Taoiseach agreed that any change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland would require the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. The Prime Minister said that, if that consent were to be expressed as a result of a poll conducted in accordance with the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973, the British Government would accept their decision".
4. This change is not, in terms of language, substantial; however, I do think that in the current deeply suspicious climate among even moderate Unionists, the change would have a significant effect upon moderate Unionist opinion.

6th November 1981

IAN GOW

cc. Michael Alexander

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ANGLO-IRISH SUMMIT MEETING

Attached is the revised draft communique agreed at the Prime Minister's briefing meeting this evening.

Cabinet Office

5 November 1981

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ANGLO-IRISH SUMMIT: DRAFT COMMUNIQUE

1. The Prime Minister, The Right Hon Margaret Thatcher MP, had discussions today, 6 November, at 10 Downing Street with the Taoiseach, Dr Garret FitzGerald TD. The Prime Minister was accompanied by the Right Hon The Lord Carrington, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the Right Hon James Prior MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Right Hon Nigel Lawson MP, Secretary of State for Energy. The Taoiseach was accompanied by the Tanaiste and Minister for Industry and Energy, Mr Michael O'Leary TD, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator James Dooge.
2. The meeting was the first between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach since Dr FitzGerald took office. They discussed a number of international questions and a range of issues arising in the European Community which are to be considered at the European Council in London on 26 and 27 November.
3. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach affirmed the importance which their two Governments attached to the maintenance and development of close Anglo-Irish relations.
4. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach agreed on the need for efforts to diminish the divisions between the two sections of the community in Northern Ireland and to reconcile the two major traditions that exist both in Northern Ireland and in the Republic. Such a development could come about only on the basis of mutual respect as between those traditions to the achievement of which the Taoiseach has made a public commitment.
5. The Taoiseach affirmed that it was the wish of the Irish Government and, he believed, of the great majority of the people of the island of Ireland, to secure the unity of Ireland by agreement and in peace. The Prime Minister affirmed, and the Taoiseach agreed, that any change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland would require the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. The Prime Minister said that, if that consent were to be expressed as a result of a poll conducted in accordance with the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973, the British Government would accept their decision.

6. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach reiterated their resolute opposition to violence, and commended the level of co-operation between the security forces of the two countries. They agreed that additional efforts should now be made to ensure that those who committed crimes in one country should not be able to escape prosecution and conviction by seeking refuge in the other and invited the British and Irish Attorneys General to give urgent consideration to how this could best be achieved.

7. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach received a joint report (annexed to this communique) on studies made by officials from both countries of possible new institutional structures, citizenship rights, security matters, economic co-operation and measures to encourage mutual understanding. The papers on which this report is based, other than that on security matters, will be published next Tuesday.

8. Recognising the unique character of the relationship between the two countries, the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach have decided to establish an Anglo-Irish Co-operation Council through which institutional expression can be given to that relationship at inter-Governmental level. This will involve regular meetings between the two Governments to discuss matters of common concern. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach agreed that it would be for the Parliaments concerned to consider at an appropriate time whether there should be an Anglo-Irish body at parliamentary level comprising members to be drawn from the British and Irish Parliaments, the European Parliament and any elected assembly that may be established for Northern Ireland. They also agreed to work towards the establishment of an advisory committee associated with the Anglo-Irish Co-operation Council on economic, social and cultural co-operation, with a wide membership.

9. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach noted that each country afforded the other's citizens most of the rights and privileges available to its own. The Taoiseach indicated that the arrangements for the grant of voting rights at parliamentary elections to British citizens resident in the Republic were well advanced and that he hoped to have the necessary legislation introduced soon.

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10. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach approved a range of activities for the improvement of economic co-operation between the two countries and in particular between Northern Ireland and the Republic. They expressed the hope that such co-operation would make a contribution towards the improvement of the economy throughout the two countries and that the practice of economic co-operation would, in itself, generate further co-operation. They gave special consideration to the question of co-operation on energy matters. They noted that assessments of the possibility of the supply of natural gas from the Republic to Northern Ireland had suggested such a project might be viable and that discussions of the terms on which gas might be supplied were now in train. They agreed on the desirability of restoring electricity interconnection between the two parts of Ireland. They also agreed that economic and technical studies should be pursued on the possibility of an electricity link across the Irish Sea.

11. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach looked forward to holding their next meeting in Dublin in the framework of the new institutional arrangements agreed upon at this meeting.

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