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Conversation with Goodall

1. Goodall of the Cabinet Office, the British Co-Chairman of the Anglo-Irish Coordinating Committee, and I took a break from the meeting in Iveagh House of the AICC of 28 September 1983 to have a walk in Stephen's Green.
2. He had said that he wished to refer to our earlier exchanges both in Dublin and in Oxford. He had spoken to the Prime Minister about the ideas I had outlined to him and she had asked him to speak also with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Foreign Secretary. He had then had another conversation with the Prime Minister.
3. He said he was authorised to say that the problem of alienation on the nationalist side was taken very seriously by the Prime Minister. The dangers posed by a spread of this alienation and its consequences in Ireland and in Britain were a matter of serious concern.
4. The ideas mentioned by me, involving the necessity of an Irish legitimisation of the system of public authority in Northern Ireland, were mentioned by Goodall to the Prime Minister. It was made clear to her that they did not commit the Irish Government or any Member of Government. The reaction he was authorised to convey was that these ideas appeared to involve two elements: the involvement of Irish security forces and the Irish judiciary in the system of maintaining security and order in Northern Ireland, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, no formal change in the position of Northern Ireland within the UK. He was authorised to say that the first part of these ideas were not at this stage rejected but that it would be necessary, in order that they receive serious consideration: (i) that they be more authoritatively conveyed (e.g. by the Taoiseach to the Prime Minister at the private session at the Summit) and (ii) that it be understood that progress on the first side would require, from a British point of view, a substantive acceptance of the formal constitutional position by Dublin.
5. I asked what this last remark meant. Goodall said that there would have to be an understanding that, for example, it could not be repudiated by another Irish Government. He said he personally believed that what would be involved would be a change of some sort

in Article 2 of the Constitution. I remarked, as a personal view, that I could not see how such a change could be contemplated or with any prudence attempted unless there were very clearly major progress seen on the first side of the equation. He said that he understood that very well.

6. Goodall stressed that it was understood there was no commitment on the part of the Irish Government to these ideas but he said it would be useful to know in advance whether the Taoiseach would, in fact, say anything about them to Mrs Thatcher. He also said that it would be useful if Hume gave a signal of general approval for this sort of thinking (he had said this also at Oxford).

7. He said that Mrs Thatcher had said that joint sovereignty in the formal sense was simply "not on". I said that senior British Civil Servants had on occasion either hinted or even stated that this was their long-term objective and I asked whether, in doing so, they had any political authority from the Prime Minister. Goodall said that they had none whatever.

8. On a personal basis Goodall asked me whether I would personally envisage joint security operations on both sides of the border. I said, speaking of course personally, that I would not, that the essence of my own idea was that such an initiative should be embarked on only because it was and would be seen to be strictly necessary in the interest of security and not for political reasons or for reasons of superficial symmetry. He took this point.

9. It was obvious from the degree of emotional tension portrayed by Goodall during this exchange that he personally favoured this approach and had urged it on the Prime Minister.

M.J. Lillis

29 September 1983

c.c. Personal and Secret
Taoiseach
Tánaiste
Minister
Secretary
Ambassador London