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SECRET

CONVERSATIONS IN LONDON

On 28 November I saw Goodall, Andrew (NIO), Brennan (NIO) and Armstrong.

Goodall said that on the evening following the Summit he had had a long conversation with the Prime Minister. She had said to him that she thought the Taoiseach seemed very disappointed at the end of their meeting and wondered why this was so. Goodall had suggested that it might be because the Taoiseach could not demonstrate any solid agreement about the way forward from his meeting with her and that the Taoiseach probably needed more than he would have gathered from her that she could offer. Mrs Thatcher had repeatedly said that while she had a good deal of sympathy for his position, he must understand that Joint Authority was not possible.

Goodall added that, on his suggestion, she had authorised him to draft a warm letter to the Taoiseach for her signature thanking the Taoiseach for coming to Chequers and expressing optimism about the future based on the progress they had made together. In the event she signed this letter on Tuesday night adding a post-script as follows "John Hume behaved very badly in the House today". (Note: Both Goodall and Armstrong as well as Malcolm Rutherford have all told us that she was deeply shocked at the tone taken by Hume).

I made as strong a case as I could for action to be taken by the British in public before the European Council so as to avoid the Council itself being over-shadowed by an Anglo-Irish rift. I also said that the Taoiseach instructed me to ask colleagues in London to convey to the Prime Minister that he did not believe that she had intended that her remarks would have anything like the unsettling effect in Ireland that they did. I went on, however, to emphasise the damage which had

been done as reflected in our press and public opinion generally and in particular in the triumphalist Unionist reaction which had been accompanied by the language of bigotry. Goodall said that he was convinced that both Thatcher and Hurd had learned a useful lesson from the Unionist reaction which had also irritated the main body of Tories in the House of Commons. Goodall added that he believed that Hurd was also "contrite" because of his various remarks after the Summit which had intensely irritated Armstrong and himself.

Goodall told me that a letter had been drafted for Mrs Thatcher's signature as well as a statement which she might use to put the record straight. The intention of the FCO had been that that statement would be used by the Prime Minister in the House yesterday.

Goodall expressed the hope that we were still "in business". I said that I believed that we were, and that the impact of the Summit would have to be digested and would in our view have a serious effect on the Irish position.

I saw Andrew and Brennan of the NIO afterwards. For the first time I had the impression of a sense of embarrassment on their side; in other words either they felt that they had misled Hurd and had been criticised accordingly or they were embarrassed by the difficulty that Hurd had created for himself. They were both very defensive of their Minister citing the text of his Press Conference. I argued that that sort of analysis was all very well between bureaucrats but that the result was that Northern Unionists had presented Hurd's remarks as a total victory for their side. They accepted that the situation had got out of balance.

I saw Armstrong at about six o'clock in the evening. It was obvious from his remarks that he had been speaking to the Prime Minister during the afternoon about the proposed letter to the Taoiseach and the proposed public statement. He

said to me that Mrs. Thatcher was in principle, agreed to send a helpful letter and make a helpful public statement. We discussed when the latter would be most timely. I felt that the British statement should be made before the European Council so that the bilateral meeting and the Council would be seen, in an improved atmosphere, as a resumption of business and so that the two leaders could stick to their normal habit of refusing to disclose the content of their exchanges. I argued also, as I had done with the three others, that the public statement should, rather than simply deal with the two difficulties which had arisen at Mrs. Thatcher's Press Conference, attempt to reach out positively to the Northern Nationalists, something Mrs. Thatcher has never done. Armstrong said that that would be quite difficult for her because of her feeling about "loyalty". I said that loyalty in the sense of Unionist attitudes could not be created in Nationalists' minds but that we were both committed to creating stability where this either did not exist or was seriously threatened. That would involve accommodating Nationalists' rights and identity and some effort would need to be made by the British Prime Minister to create the right atmosphere. Again Armstrong personally saw merit in this but doubted that the Prime Minister would find it possible to talk in those terms:

Armstrong undertook to see if she could make a statement before coming to Dublin.

I gather from Peter Prendergast that he spoke to Ingham in London on the morning of the 29th and persuaded Ingham that Mrs. Thatcher should make one reply at her Press Conference in which she would express a positive concern about the interest of the 600,000 Catholics of Northern Ireland in a way which would be helpful. I gather that Ingham agreed that Mrs. Thatcher would not allow herself to be provoked into adding to or qualifying this statement in any way but that she would adhere to the

custom of saying that she could not make any further comment on matters which had been discussed between herself and the Taoiseach.

M.J. Lillis

November, 1984

Personal and Secret

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Minister
Secretary
Mr. Nally
Mr. Ward
P. Prendergast
Ambassador London