

Record of a conversation between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach
at 0920 hrs on Monday, 5 December at the Zappeion Hall in Athens

Present: Prime Minister Dr. FitzGerald
Mr. A.J.Coles Mr. Nally

The Prime Minister referred to the state of discussion in the European Council and in particular to the question of milk. A super levy would cause just as much trouble for the United Kingdom as for Ireland. She could accept a super levy only if all the others agreed to it. The base year should be 1983. She could envisage special structural measures for Ireland. Dr. FitzGerald said that he had visited all the Member States and had found that there was much sympathy for the Irish problem. The Prime Minister observed that milk production in Ireland had increased by 50 per cent since Ireland had joined the Community. Dr. FitzGerald replied that Irish milk production was still well below the British and Danish levels. Much of the justification for Irish membership of the Community related to milk. It was impossible for him to agree to a super levy without dérogation for Ireland. The press had apparently been told that Britain was blocking an agreement of the kind Ireland wanted. This would be very unhelpful to him domestically.

The Prime Minister then said that she understood that the Taoiseach wished to discuss security co-operation. Mr. Prior had recently discussed the McGovern case with Mr. Barry who had said that he would regard the matter as closed. Dr. FitzGerald said that the situation had worsened considerably as a result of press comment.

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The Irish Police Commissioner was not prepared to talk at this stage with the Chief Constable in Northern Ireland. This was very bad for the general relationship between the two police authorities. He recalled that the Chief Constable had said in May that he would appoint someone to examine the McGovern case. Thus when he (Dr. FitzGerald) had discussed the matter with the Prime Minister in Stuttgart in June he had said that the trend was in the right direction. On several occasions we had promised to let the Irish know the results of our thinking but had failed to do so. There had been an arrangement that Sir Philip Woodfield should talk to Mr. Nally in August but this conversation had not happened. The replies that had been received from the North to questions from the South were inadequate and were seen by the Commissioner as a cover-up.

Police co-operation had deteriorated. Until May, 1982, there had been regular meetings on the border. Press leaks at that time had lead to the termination, by agreement, of these meetings. Then during 1983 co-operation on the border had further deteriorated. At operational level it was reasonably good but there was no overall direction. The Joint Co-ordinating Committee had not been re-established. The Garda Commissioner had been promised co-operation by the Chief Constable in May but had received none and, having taken delivery of a totally unsatisfactory letter, now felt that he could not deal with the Chief Constable. The press were full of this matter. We could not go on like this.

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Mr. Prior was to see the Irish Minister of Justice in January. It was essential to get police co-operation back on the rails. There should be an investigation, perhaps a joint investigation, of the McGovern case.

The Prime Minister suggested that Mr. Coles and Mr. Nally should meet while in Athens and go over the ground again. It was essential that security co-operation was maintained.

The discussion ended at 0935 hrs.

A.S.C.

5 December, 1983

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SUBJECT
re MCAW

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Filed on:

1) Inland: mtgs
with the Taoiseach
PT6

→ 2) European Councils:
Athens PT 13

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

5 December, 1983

Dear John,

Meeting between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach
in Athens on Monday, 5 December

The Prime Minister and Dr. FitzGerald had a short meeting in the margins of the European Council in Athens today. I enclose a record of the conversation. I also enclose a note of my subsequent conversation with Mr. Nally.

I am sending a copy of this letter and enclosure to Peter Ricketts (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

John Lyon.

J. Lyon, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office

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