

SUBJECT
MASTER

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Filed on:

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

27 February 1992

Dear William,

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH MR. REYNOLDS:
THE IRISH CONSTITUTION

Looking back through the records I have sent on last night's talks, I realise that I failed to record that the Prime Minister did say to Mr. Reynolds that it was helpful to us that he had indicated that Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution could be on the negotiating table. In reply, Mr. Reynolds said that he linked this with the Government of Ireland Act 1920. It was clear from the way he spoke that he was attracted by the Government of Ireland Act, not because he saw us repealing it as a quid pro quo for repeal of Articles 2 and 3, but because it contained examples of all-Ireland co-operation which he clearly saw as relevant to present needs, and indeed a precursor of the kind of co-operation now taking place within the European Community.

As my earlier letter pointed out, the Prime Minister told Mr. Reynolds that references of this kind to the 1920 Act were seen by Unionists as an attempt by the Irish to exercise some kind of condominium. Mr. Reynolds denied that this was the case. The Unionist position was fully protected by Article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

We have clearly not heard the last of this argument and the issue may warrant further analysis. Does the argument run in a wholly negative way from our point of view? Or are there things that we might want to do in co-operation with the Irish Government which we ourselves might want to justify in terms of the 1920 legislation?

I am copying this letter to Richard Gozney (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

Jams.
Stephen
(J. S. WALL)

William Fittall, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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