

PRIME MINISTER

a) "the bomb" has slowed things down and may in the end kill any new initiative because I suspect it will be the first of a series.

b) I am worried by the suggestion of bad faith with Grant

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Fitzgerald. I think that he can't go ahead even with these vague talks without his agreement. mt.

At the Ministerial meeting on 5 October you said that the political parties in Northern Ireland had to be given some idea of the ground being covered in the confidential exchanges with the Republic. Douglas Hurd agreed and said that he would set down the sort of things he proposed to say to them.

Robert Armstrong (Flag A) now says that he sees very considerable risks in discussing these matters even obliquely with the Northern Ireland parties before you see Dr FitzGerald. His main argument is that you might find yourself provoking a confrontation with the Unionists unnecessarily.

Douglas Hurd (Flag B) believes that he should speak to them and can do so without provoking too hostile a reaction.

Geoffrey Howe (Flag C) sees risks in at least some of the things which Douglas Hurd proposes to say and foresees difficulties with the Irish Government, if they are consulted in advance. He thinks that Douglas Hurd should be extremely circumspect in talking to the parties in the North.

You will be receiving separately Robert Armstrong's record of his latest round of talks. The message that we shall have to go more slowly has got across. This means that even less will emerge from the Summit than once seemed likely, which in turn reduces further the need to be specific to the parties in the North about the subjects being discussed. On the other hand, Douglas Hurd has an obligation to hold a further round with the parties in the

North. He needs to say something about the subjects under discussion. And what he proposes to say is already very modest.

Agree that Douglas Hurd should talk to the parties in the North, broadly on the lines he suggests as qualified by Geoffrey Howe?

Or prefer a further meeting to discuss this?  
(Difficult to fit in before Douglas Hurd goes to Dublin on Thursday).

e.d.p.

18 October 1984