

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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Murray, BBC: I might move to Northern Ireland if you do not mind. What was said last week, what was your reaction to the British Government's reaction?

President: Would you understand if I say that I do not like to react to other people's reaction but I am ready to give you my feeling on the Northern Ireland question. Let us not mix resolution passed by the Parliament as such in October-November and the reactions of a Committee of the European Parliament. My attitude as President of the Commission has to be different in the two cases and that created some misunderstanding yesterday in Cork. The European Parliament Political Affairs Committee voted on 23 February a draft resolution on Northern Ireland proposed by several political groups. The draft resolution expresses <sup>the</sup> ~~concern~~ <sup>of many</sup> ~~about~~ the human suffering caused by the conflict in the province and calls upon the Community to take new initiatives on the political <sup>end</sup> ~~side~~ on the economic side to improve the situation there. This draft resolution of the Political Affairs Committee will be proposed for adoption by the European Parliament as a whole. If and when they are adopted, the Commission will naturally prepare a full response to the substance of the Parliament's resolution in <sup>and social</sup> so far as this concerns the ~~solution and~~ economic <sup>aspects</sup> of Northern Ireland which are in the competence of the Commission under the EEC <sup>is</sup> Treaties and that <sup>the</sup> resolution which the Parliament as such passed already in October. The political aspects of any resolution adopted by Parliament invite in the first instance a response from the Council of Ministers and the individual member States; that is why if you look at the resolution <sup>passed</sup> <sup>it said</sup> ~~in October~~ the Council and member States and then in the second part asks the Commission to take some economic measures.

However, may I take advantage of this opportunity here to express the continuing grave concern felt by the Commission as such at the violence and suffering in Northern Ireland and our solidarity as Europeans with the people of the province. I want to make that clear. Now as my colleagues, Dick Burke and Christopher Tugendhat, have already emphasised the existing special economic measures for Northern Ireland and those new measures we now envisage and that we are going to discuss in Commission next Wednesday week, offer a small terrain of neutral ground on which proposals derive support from across the divide of the most afflicted corner of the European Community. These economic measures which have the highest priority for the Commission appear to us to be the most practical response from the Commission at this stage to the human concern which all people in Europe have for the tragic situation in Northern Ireland. And may I add that the Taoiseach this morning made that point too.

Murray, BBC: Would you welcome a political initiative as well as an economic one?

President: Well, I had the feeling that precisely on this particular initiative at the Political Affairs Committee there was some misunderstanding as far as I got rumours from different political groups and it is up to the Parliament to take first this decision. But I would approve all initiatives which could be helpful in easing the tension and not creating new ones.

Smith: In the case of the Falkland Islands, the European Community took a united stand imposing sanctions against Argentina and Ireland when it disassociated itself from these sanctions drew the wrath of the British Government and there were a lot of letters appearing in the British newspapers and Mrs. Thatcher also was quoted as saying "hands off Ulster". Is the Commission in the long term going to adopt the policy of the British Government and say this is an internal matter while our politicians are

saying there is violence and death in a corner of the Community over which you are President of the Commission and can the Commission continue to say this is an internal domestic matter <sup>when</sup> <sup>involving</sup> it is actually/two member States, and there can be an overflow of violence to London and to Dublin and can the Commission continue to take this line, or will you say that you have a right eventually to draw up economic plans and look into this matter in a much deeper way?

President: .I said it in my statement which you noticed I have <sup>in writing</sup> prepared/because it is a very delicate situation and I want to be clear on what I said here. Now you know that political questions are the competence of the political discussions in the Council of <sup>in</sup> Ministers and/political co-operation and not in the competence of the Commission. Not specifically in this field but if it would be in another country, another part of the Community, no country would admit that the Commission and the President of the Commission discusses political implications; it is not of my competence. But, as I said, it is a part of the Community and we are concerned with everything that happens in any part of the Community. We want to be helpful. <sup>you see, more easily</sup> Sometimes, ~~to say~~ you can be helpful if you do not make too many political statements. We all are concerned.

Murray: Do you find the British reaction disturbing in so far as the British Government and the Labour Party have said they will not co-operate with the Political Committee.

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President: Well, I would regret a new clash between the European Parliament and one member Government and I think my job, if I have any role to play in this now, is not here but in Strasbourg to try and find a common position, a common ground.

Erskine, BBC: How valid do you believe such an investigation could be if the British Government does not co-operate with it?

President: Very honestly, I do not know what the Political Committee of the European Parliament envisages and want to have an opportunity to talk about it with Mr. Rumor. That was the confusion before I make a statement yesterday when I said please/give me an opportunity/to talk to my Mr. Rumor and say what do you want to do, what do you envisage former colleague ~~what to do because there were already some misunder-~~standings. That is how the world is made and built unfortunately on misunderstandings.

Erskine, BBC: One more question concerning Northern Ireland. As you know there is a problem of smuggling over the Border.

President: I do not know, how should I?

Erskine: There is a problem about Northern Ireland which is partly brought about by EEC subsidies which enable people to import goods from Northern Ireland into the Republic. Is there anything that you feel can be done by the EEC to alleviate the situation?

President: I bluntly admit that I did not know. Give me time to consider my response and I will let you know the next time I come to Dublin or send you a letter responding to that question.

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Cooney: On the question of Northern Ireland, did Dr. FitzGerald qualify the position of the Irish Government since 1973 which has been that political questions affecting Northern Ireland are not within the competence of political co-operation and has Dr. FitzGerald indicated a willingness to change in response to the European Parliament.

President: Dr. FitzGerald is, as you know, a specialist on the Treaty and knows what are the competences of the Commission and what are not. That is why he did not discuss with me the political side. What he said to me this morning was he insisted the Commission should do something on the economic projects for Belfast. That is all.

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Erskine, BBC: What was your response when Dr. FitzGerald asked you to do something about Belfast?

Thorn: I said Yes. I said that the Commission would be dealing with this proposal on Wednesday week and that I had been committed to it since I ~~was~~ joined the Commission, that perhaps there are some problems on ~~the~~ the side of the Council but I believe not in the Commission.

Erskine: Were you able to offer him anything concrete.

Thorn: Oh, he knows what is on the table.

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