

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

Anglo-Irish Joint Studies

In the light of your meeting on 19th March (Mr. Alexander's letter to Mr. Walden of that date), which reviewed the first round of meetings of the Anglo-Irish Joint Study Groups, comments were passed to the Irish as proposed in the Lord Privy Seal's minute to you of 3rd April. A second round of meetings of the Study Groups then took place on 13th-14th April. I submit a report to me on these by the Chairman of the Official Committee on Anglo-Irish Relations, Mr. Wade-Gery.

2. As you will see, Citizenship has now emerged as a potentially sensitive study, along with Institutional Structures. Mr. Wade-Gery's report attaches (at Annexes A and B) British drafts for the Joint Reports of these two Groups. I should be grateful for your agreement that these should now be given to the Irish.

3. The other three Study Groups are not expected to give rise to difficulty. We are continuing to press the extradition point in the Security Group. For the report of the Group on Measures for the Encouragement of Mutual ~~Mis~~Understanding, some care will be necessary over the drafting of a passage on Mutual Misconceptions; the proposed British draft for this passage is also attached to Mr. Wade-Gery's report (at Annex C).

4. All five Joint Reports are likely to be agreed at a third round of meetings to be held by mid-May. Where the attitudes of the two sides cannot readily be reconciled, they will simply be recorded side by side. We shall not therefore need to shift from our own essential positions; and by the same token we shall not be able to control what the Irish side wish to say about theirs. We shall have a chance to review the disputed passages between the meetings of the Study Groups and the next meeting of the Joint Steering Group, at which the Joint Reports will in the first instance be considered.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

5. When the Joint Steering Group held its first meeting on 30th January it was agreed in principle to meet again about the beginning of May to review progress and to consider what could be reported to you and the Taoiseach. The Steering Group cannot now meet until about the middle of May. But unless it meets before the Spring Bank Holiday, it will have to stand over to around mid-June. The Irish have strongly urged (for reasons unstated but presumably connected with their electoral timetable) that we ought to meet in May. The best date available seems to be 20th May, which happens to be also the date of the local elections in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Office do not consider that this coincidence matters: there will be no publicity for the meeting. We shall therefore be going ahead accordingly.

6. How we proceed after the Steering Group meeting will depend partly on whether the Irish decide to bring forward further proposals in the institutional field, as they have hinted that they may; and partly on the interrelated questions of when Mr. Haughey has his elections and when you have your next Summit meeting with him. The Irish still seem to be thinking in terms of a July Summit. ?

7. Despite the difficulties it seems clearly in our interest to keep the Studies going, as part of the preparation for the next Summit. Their existence, as the product of the Dublin Summit and the vehicle by which its spirit is kept in being, has no doubt contributed to the Irish Government's comparatively restrained behaviour over the Sands affair so far.

8. I am sending copies of this minute and the enclosure to those who attended your meeting on 19th March, viz the Home Secretary, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Lord Privy Seal and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; and to the Secretary of State for Defence.

RIA

Robert Armstrong

29th April, 1981

Delay further  
because of  
Port Sands  
meeting in  
May

I think it  
does matter  
I will look