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File AH
Ireland
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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

I have shown the Prime Minister your minute A05220 of 6 July 1981 reporting your conversations with Mr Dermot Nally, and she has taken note of this.

She does not think that we can take a view on the question of a meeting with Dr Fitzgerald until the position on the hunger strike is resolved in one way or the other.

I am sending copies of this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Lord Privy Seal and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

JAW.

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Prime Minister.

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I do not think that we can take any view on a meeting with Dr Fitzgerald until the position on the budget which is resolved in one way or the other.

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MR. WHITMORE

Agree not

Mr 6 vi

Following the Prime Minister's conversations with the Taoiseach on 1st July, I have had two conversations with Mr. Dermot Nally, following up that part of the conversation between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach which related to the possibility of an early meeting between the two of them.

2. In the first conversation Mr. Nally said that the Taoiseach very much hoped to have a first meeting with the Prime Minister before the summer holiday. It was clear that Dr. Fitzgerald thought that his prospects of preserving a measure of bipartisanship in Dublin would be greater the earlier this first meeting with the Prime Minister was held. I said that the Prime Minister's diary was very difficult indeed for the rest of this month. Quite apart from the ordinary pressures of business before the Recess, she had the Ottawa Summit; and the Royal Wedding, with the series of diplomatic encounters which this involved. It might just be possible to fit in half a day between the Economic Summit and the Royal Wedding (I have in mind the morning of Friday, 24th July), but if - as seemed very possible - that could not be managed it would be necessary to think in terms of the first week in August. I should need to discuss this further with the Prime Minister. We agreed that it would be useful for Mr. Nally and me to meet in any case to discuss the resumption of the Anglo/Irish joint studies; and we agreed to proceed with that on Wednesday, 15th July, in the morning.

3. I discussed this with the Prime Minister on Friday, 3rd July at 11.15 am. She made the following points:-

- (i) It would really be very difficult for her to fit in a meeting with the Taoiseach before the end of July, given the other pressures on the timetable.
- (ii) It would be preferable for the meeting to be the next of the regular bilaterals, rather than a special meeting out of series.
- (iii) Given the other political problems crowding in on us in relation to Ireland, she was not anxious to accelerate the Anglo/Irish joint studies at this time.

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4. Mr. Nally rang again on the evening of Friday, 3rd July. He said that, thinking further about these matters, the Taoiseach thought that it would be difficult for him to meet the Prime Minister unless and until there was some thing to show from the joint studies. Mr. Nally had said he had told the Taoiseach that he saw no possibility of this in time for a meeting before the summer holiday. But the Taoiseach would still like, if possible, to say something in general on the direction and trend. I said that I could see no possibility of this either. Quite apart from the fact that the studies were not sufficiently far enough advanced, given the other political problems surrounding us both, including some of the speeches in the previous day's debate in the House of Commons, a revival of public interest in the joint studies or any suggestion that they were being pressed forward could give rise to great suspicion in the Protestant community in Northern Ireland and among its friends at Westminster. Mr. Nally interjected that, if the current problems in Northern Ireland continued to be as difficult as they now were, the Taoiseach would be unable to come for a meeting in any case.

5. I then said that my understanding of the meeting between Mr. Nally and myself proposed for 15th July, was for the purpose of discussing the modalities for resuming the joint studies and we were not expecting to exchange further written material before then. He said that it was his understanding that we should exchange papers before then: all the papers were, after all, without commitment, and they would like to see the exchanges of paper resumed before the meeting on 15th July, as being relevant to the discussion of a resumption of the studies. I did not make any commitment to this.

6. Reverting to the question of a meeting between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, I said that the Prime Minister's view was that it should be the next in the series of regular bilaterals. We had in any case envisaged the next bilateral during this period. Mr. Nally agreed that that was one way of presenting the meeting; the other would be to treat it as an occasion for a first "getting to know" informal meeting. He said that the Taoiseach still favoured a date as early as possible: before the end of July if possible, otherwise early in August. I said that I thought that if anything the end of July looked even more difficult today than it did yesterday; and in any case if he and I did not meet

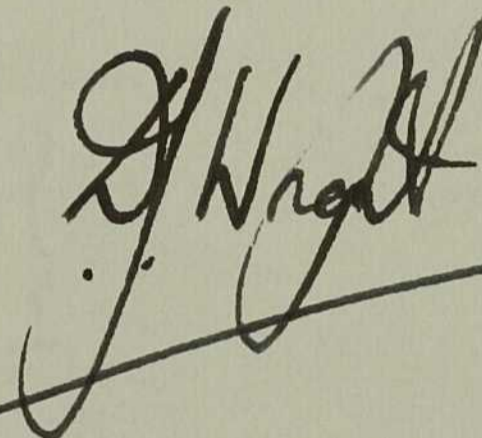
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before 15th July, an interval would need to elapse after that meeting before the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach met.

7. We reached no conclusions, but agreed to reflect on the matter. I said that I would expect to be in touch with Mr. Nally again in the second part of this week after my return from Ottawa. If he wished to communicate before then he could always talk to Mr. Wade-Gery.

8. We ought clearly to consider this week how to play this hand. It may, of course, all become academic if hunger strikers begin to die again. If, on the other hand, the hunger strike is called off, we could expect Dr Fitzgerald to put the pressure on for a meeting with the Prime Minister before the summer holiday.

9. I am sending copies of this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Lord Privy Seal and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.



ROBERT ARMSTRONG

(Drafted by Sir R. Armstrong
and signed in his absence)

6th July 1981