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PRIME MINISTER

Anglo-Irish Relations

As you know, the Irish election interrupted a certain amount of ongoing business, following up the Summit which you had with Dr. FitzGerald on 6th November 1981. In particular you and the then Taoiseach committed yourselves to holding the next Anglo-Irish Summit "in the spring". Clearly, if Dr. FitzGerald had been returned, Anglo-Irish activity would have resumed at the point where it was broken off when the election was called. But since he was not returned, the question arises whether we should revert to business as usual and, if so, how.

2. Given Mr. Haughey's utterances since the election and during his visit to the United States about British withdrawal from Northern Ireland and reunification, I see no case for taking the initiative: that could be misunderstood in Dublin. Nevertheless, there remains the question of what, if anything, you should say about these matters to Mr. Haughey, if you see him and if he raises them with you at the European Council next week.

3. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office view is that what Mr. Haughey has recently been saying does not go much beyond what he said as long ago as June 1980. Moreover, bombast apart, there remains a careful obscurity in his language which leaves him uncommitted.

4. I understand that Mr. Haughey has now asked for a meeting in Brussels next week, at which he will no doubt wish to discuss Northern Ireland. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office will advise that you should see him. It would clearly be difficult to refuse to do so. It is also likely that I will myself see Dermot Nally, my opposite number on the Irish side, in Brussels next week; so the question also arises of what I should say to him on Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council (AIIC) business if he raises the matter.

5. I think that the correct line to take is that we remain ready to carry on with business as usual but that the running will have to be made by the Irish. There is to be another Ministerial meeting, which will (unless we specify

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otherwise) be in the AIIC framework, when Mr. Wyn Roberts meets Mr. Flynn, Irish Minister for the Gaeltacht, on 30th March. Other meetings are in the offing, for example between Mr. Adam Butler and the new Irish Energy Minister on Kinsale Gas. If Mr. Haughey talks about a Summit, you could say that we have assumed the new Government would need more time than a Summit as early as May would allow them, and that May would now be very difficult for you. Similarly, I could say to Mr. Nally that we shall expect to hear from them in due course about dates for a meeting of the Official Co-ordinating Committee. All this would be in low key and handled very much as a routine resumption of business.

6. If you agree to see Mr. Haughey in Brussels, and if he is to be accompanied by Mr. Nally, it would be a help to me if I could be with you, so as to know how to deal with Mr. Nally in the light of your meeting.

7. There is another loose end which might usefully be tied up. I sought your agreement last January to my inviting Sir David Orr to be British Chairman of the Executive Board of the Anglo-Irish Encounter organisation. You thought that a decision on this should be deferred until after the election. If Mr. Nally raises AIIC business with me, I should be grateful for authority to mention this to him in order to confirm that there will be no difficulty from the Irish side, and then to approach Sir David himself. I should like to get ahead with this because Sir David's name has come up in connection with an appointment in Northern Ireland, and I should not wish to risk losing such an ideal candidate for the Encounter organisation.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Robert Armstrong

26th March 1982