

Ref. A083/3090

MR COLES

Anglo-Irish Summit

A.J.C. 31/10

I am due to visit Dublin on Wednesday 2 November for a meeting with Mr Nally, to tie up the documentation for the forthcoming Anglo-Irish Summit. I am minuting you separately on this; and I shall also be sending forward next week the assessment requested by the Prime Minister of the various ideas that the Irish Government have been trying out at various levels for moving the Northern Ireland problem forward. In the meantime there are two points on which I need to know the Prime Minister's mind before I go to Dublin.

2. First, there are apparently rumours circulating in Dublin to the effect that, while the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is firmly against any "joint sovereignty" solutions, the Prime Minister is "interested in new approaches", not excluding some form of joint sovereignty. My understanding is that the Prime Minister is no less firmly opposed to any kind of "joint sovereignty" solution in Northern Ireland (not least because of its implications for Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands). If that is right, I hope that the Prime Minister will agree that, if I become aware of any signs that the Irish Government attach some credence to these rumours about her attitude, I should scotch them. I would do so by saying that, while the Prime Minister would not want to exclude any ideas which might, without altering the constitutional position of Northern Ireland, help to contribute to lowering tension and reducing violence, she would have great difficulty with any proposals for "joint sovereignty".

3. The second point is this. I do not suppose that the Taoiseach is in a hurry with the sort of ideas he appears to be canvassing: it is all still very exploratory. He is not likely to want to discuss them in detail with the Prime Minister at the forthcoming Summit meeting. But I suspect that he will be very anxious to discover for himself, and directly, what the Prime Minister's own



thoughts, hopes and expectations are in this area. I am not surprised to learn therefore that he is pressing for a period of time en tete-a-tete with the Prime Minister without colleagues, advisers or note-takers. I think that this is a prospect which entails considerable dangers for us. He is, as we know, a very rapid and indistinct talker, and (I have sometimes felt) not always an attentive listener, and I should be nervous about the possibility of his going away with some misconception of what the Prime Minister had said or thought which would subsequently give rise to trouble. So I should have thought that the Prime Minister would be well advised to have someone with her throughout her tete-a-tete with the Taoiseach. But she may take a different view, and I should be glad to know how she would like me to react, if this question comes up when I meet Mr Nally.

BA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

28 October 1983