



Prime Minister 8. /

This is RTA's account of his discussion with the Irish last week-end. You have already seen the attached document.

You should see my letter giving your comments on the draft

Ref. A084/2948

PRIME MINISTER

Anglo-Irish Relations: Northern Ireland

communiqué [B]. RTA will now produce revisions. CDP

I visited Dublin on 2 and 3 November 1984, while you were in New Delhi, for a further round of talks with Mr Nally. I was accompanied by Mr Goodall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Mr Bourn and Mr Brennan (Northern Ireland Office) and Mr Goodison, the British Ambassador in Dublin. Mr Nally was accompanied by Mr Sean Donlon and Mr Michael Lillis (Department of External Affairs), Mr Andrew Ward (Ministry of Justice), Mr Declan Quigley (Attorney General's Department) and Mr Noel Dorr, Irish Ambassador in London.

2. The main purposes of our meeting were:

(1) to show the Irish side the draft British statement of position as amended in the light of Ministerial discussion last week;

(2) to discuss with the Irish side the possible contents of a paragraph in the draft communiqué from the next Anglo-Irish Summit on Northern Ireland.

3. It was clear that Mr Nally and his colleagues were relieved when they found that we were still talking to them: I thought that there had been some genuine fear, following the visit which Mr Hurd and Mr Andrew paid to Dublin, that the British Government, and in particular you, might have lost interest in the process. There was no disposition to underrate the difficulties, and I think no certainty on the Irish side that what we could offer would be substantial enough to carry the Irish Government through a referendum on the constitution. But the process of discussing a text clarified thinking in many respects;



and I was left with the impression that, while there are still matters on which they will be pressing us to go further than we have so far gone, they very much want an agreement and are prepared to accept that they are not going to get as much as they would like in order to get it.

4. They also moved significantly on timing. Here, they appeared to recognise that it was unrealistic to expect that any new arrangements which might be agreed should be in place in time for the local elections in Northern Ireland in May 1985. They accepted that it would be premature to look for definitive or detailed decisions from the two Heads of Government at the forthcoming bilateral Summit. What they are hoping for is that further work will be commissioned at the Summit and that this will be sufficiently far advanced in the next few months for it to be possible before May 1985 to give some firm public indication of the outline of the arrangements towards which the two Governments will be working.

5. As to the proposals for consulting the Irish Government about Northern Ireland affairs, I have no doubt that they have accepted that the relationship will be purely consultative and that the final power of decision will continue to rest with the British Government. The differences that remain are semantic and procedural. The Irish Government would prefer not to use the word "consultation" but some such phrase as "contribute to the formulation of policy". On the procedural side, they have not withdrawn their proposal for carrying out the process of consultation in a Ministerial commission, but my impression is that that is in the end a matter of form rather than substance and that they would in the end be prepared to accept what we are proposing.

6. There remain some important differences on the role and functions of the proposed Joint Security Commission, but in my judgment none of which are incapable of resolution.



7. On the question of practical policing measures, the Irish side again showed some signs of movement. They still think that our proposals do not go far enough, and the statement of the Irish side's position still includes a reference to the idea of establishing locally based police forces. But I am sure that in practice they know that that is not going to happen; and towards the end of our meeting they even abandoned their proposal for some "restructuring" of the RUC; it is now described as some "change" in the RUC. They made the point that there was some trade-off between what happens on practical policing and what happens elsewhere: the better the deal we can offer them on other matters, the less they will need to press for on practical policing. My own judgment is that, if we could say that we agreed that the aim should be to have an RUC in which the proportion of Catholics to Protestants was comparable with that for the population as a whole, and that in the long run the aim should be that predominantly nationalist areas should be policed primarily by people from the nationalist community, and if we could indicate the possibility of early practical measures to begin giving effect to that, they would probably in the end accept the position.

8. Perhaps the main difficulty for the Irish side that emerged from the weekend's meeting was a new one, which resulted from our insistence that a system of devolved government based on an elected assembly and on a Northern Ireland executive would be integral to the set of proposals we have in mind. They do not disagree in principle that a measure of devolution is desirable in the context of these proposals, but they are clearly very fearful lest the attempt to achieve a measure of devolution might fail and that, because of purely timetable considerations, they might have gone ahead with arrangements for a referendum on a change in the constitution and then find that it was not going to be possible to reach agreement on devolution after all. It is this fear that explains the second sentence of paragraph 8



of the British statement of position, which records the Irish side as saying that they would not wish the introduction of consultative arrangements to be blocked if it should prove impossible to get devolved government under way.

9. As to the draft passage for inclusion in the Summit communique the main change from the draft which emerged from Ministerial discussion last week is to the first sub-paragraph. The Irish side pressed hard for a different form of words derived from the Forum report. We said that it was absolutely essential that the constitutional guarantee should be unambiguously reasserted in the traditional wording: anything else would arouse deep suspicions among the unionists. The Irish side then asked that the constitutional guarantee should be preceded by a reference to the Irish Government's wish that the two parts of Ireland should come together by freely negotiated agreement and in peace. In the form in which it now stands we thought that it would be difficult to object to this restatement of the Irish aspiration, in a form which makes clear that it is only an aspiration or a wish and not a claim and that its realisation depends upon a freely negotiated agreement. The Irish side also said that, if the constitutional guarantee had to be restated in the traditional wording, it would also be useful to repeat from earlier communiqes the statement of the British Government's readiness to accept any decision of the majority of people in Northern Ireland in a poll conducted in accordance with the 1973 Act.

10. The other change to the draft communique was to run together the third and fourth sub-paragraphs of our earlier draft. The change of substance is that the new sub-paragraph (iii) contains an agreement that the identities of the two communities in Northern Ireland should be reflected in the institutions of government in Northern Ireland.



11. Finally, the reference to close and continuing dialogue has been taken from the preamble and put at the end of the passage so as to signal more clearly that these are matters of current discussions between the two Governments.
12. We now have your comments on the revised draft. I shall be sending you a submission in a day or two's time with proposals for further changes to the draft which I will then (if you are content) put to Mr Nally.
13. As to procedure, the Irish side will now produce for their Ministers an Irish statement of position. Given the discussion over the weekend, it should be possible for them to produce a document which properly reports the British Government's positions; but they will give us an opportunity to comment on and propose alterations to their draft before it goes to Irish Ministers.
14. It is also the duty of the Steering Committee of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council to agree upon the other elements in the draft communique which will emerge from the Summit. The other elements will presumably include a reference to the continuing work of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council and some reference to discussions between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach on outstanding European Community issues, notably enlargement. Arrangements are in hand for drafting this material. Mr Nally and I hope that all this can be done without a further meeting between him and me; but of course we stand ready to have such a meeting if it is required.
15. I am sending copies of this minute, and of the latest drafts of the British statement and position and the draft communique passage, to the Secretaries of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and Northern Ireland, and to Sir Antony Acland, Mr Robert Andrew and Mr David Goodall.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

5 November 1984