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PRIME MINISTER

ANGLO/IRISH RELATIONS : NORTHERN IRELAND

You have a commitment to a further Anglo/Irish summit early in the New Year. The Irish will want it to be well before the local elections in Northern Ireland in May. This points to a date in March or April.

It will be necessary to ensure that both sides go into the Summit with compatible expectations next time. This means very thorough preparation. One suggestion you might consider is to have a meeting at Ministerial level with the Irish before the Summit, as well as continuing the Armstrong/Nally talks. This would ensure that there was no misunderstanding or exaggerated expectations at the political level.

You will need an internal meeting soon after the New Year to set some guidelines for further discussions with the Irish. It would be helpful to have a short paper for such a meeting. This might examine two main issues:

(a) the scope for a more limited bargain than that envisaged in the original Armstrong/Nally talks and discussed at the Summit. This might centre on the Joint Security Commission idea, though given the strong Irish resistance to singling out security alone, it might explore the scope for widening the range of issues which could legitimately be raised in such a Joint Commission. On the Irish side, we would not press for a referendum on amending the constitution, but would look to greater practical cooperation from them in security matters.

(b) as a fallback, ways in which the current initiative could be terminated at the Summit with the minimum possible damage to Anglo/Irish relations.

Agree to commission a paper on the lines suggested above and hold an internal meeting in mid-January?

*CDP*

10 December 1984

*I think we need to consider a political framework. The Irish will not accept the above alone*