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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

ANGLO/IRISH RELATIONS: NORTHERN IRELAND

We shall need a meeting early in the New Year to set guidelines for further discussions with the Irish Government in advance of the next Anglo/Irish Summit. We shall try to arrange this for mid-January.

The Prime Minister would welcome, in advance of the meeting, a short paper on the way forward. This might examine, in particular, three 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) in conjunction with (a) above, the possibilities for establishing a political framework in Northern Ireland acceptable to both communities and make it easier for the Irish Government to accept the limited bargain;

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

I should be grateful if a short paper covering these points, though not necessarily limited to them, could be prepared.

I am copying this minute to Mr. Appleyard (FCO) and Mr. Sandiford (Northern Ireland Office).

(C.D. POWELL)
12 December 1984

Tmg.