

Ref. A084/2623

MR POWELL

The Commission is Prime Minister 2/6
initial. It was that which CDP
gave so much trouble last time. 4/x
In my view it must be in very general terms only.
Anglo-Irish Relations: Northern Ireland

Thank you for your minute of 26 September.

2. I very much doubt whether, at the next Anglo-Irish Summit, the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach will be taking definitive decisions on a possible package. I do not see how my discussions with Mr Nally can get as far as that in the time available. Moreover, I am sure that it would be counter-productive if a fully-fledged package emerged directly from the Summit: the fact that it had done so would be damaging to any chance it might have of acceptance in Northern Ireland.

3. As I see it, the farthest we are likely to get by the time of the Summit is to be able to report to the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach on the outlines of a possible package. The decision which Ministers will be asked to take is whether such a package has sufficient prospects of being, or being made to be, acceptable in this country, in Northern Ireland and in the Republic, for further detailed work to be done on it.

4. If the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach decide that the package, or something on its lines, has a future, they will then have to consider the timetable. The Taoiseach will be acutely aware of the need, as he sees it, to have something publicly in being and agreed before the local elections in Northern Ireland next May, if further alienation of the minority community and further political progress of Sinn Fein are to be avoided. The timetable will have to allow for completion of detailed work, and then for a process of "selling" the resulting package to the various parties concerned. It will also be necessary to consider what other elements there will need to be alongside the Anglo-Irish package: for instance, would it be sensible to make proposals for further devolution in Northern Ireland at the same time as the package (paragraph 7 of my minute of 24 September (A084/2367 refers to this); and we are now on notice from the Irish Government that

Not possible

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they believe that it would be important to have a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland as part of any new arrangements: this has been proposed by the Official Unionist Party and by the Democratic Unionist Party as well as by the SDLP in Northern Ireland.

5. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach will also need to decide what should be said publicly directly after the Summit. If they agree that the package should be pursued, it may be possible to reach agreement on a very general statement of objectives which could be issued as a communique from the Summit and which would be as it were the framework for the subsequent package. If they decide that there is no possibility of progress on the basis of the package, the communique will have to be confined to some very general remarks on the subject of Northern Ireland. But that would be regarded by the Taoiseach as a failure.

6. I am sending copies of this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, to Sir Antony Acland, Mr Robert Andrew, Mr David Goodall and Sir Philip Woodfield.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

3 October 1984