



Prime Minister
C.M.
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Ref. A084/3176

MR POWELL

Anglo-Irish Relations: Northern Ireland

Thank you for your minute of 28 November.

2. Since my minute of 27 November we have had a visit today from Mr Michael Lillis. Mr Lillis has been to see Mr Goodall, Mr Andrew and me in that order. I attach Mr Goodall's account of his conversation. I understand that the conversation with Mr Andrew was very similar.

3. In talking to me Mr Lillis added a further point. In the present political situation in Dublin, as he reports it, there is a danger that, if nothing changes before the meeting of the European Council, that meeting will, for the media, be dominated by its significance in terms of Anglo-Irish relations, which are much more important to the Irish press than European issues. Mr Lillis, speaking on the Taoiseach's instructions, said that the Taoiseach was very anxious to avoid that situation if possible, for the sake of the European Council as well as for himself and the Prime Minister. The Taoiseach fears that, if the Prime Minister arrives at Dublin for the European Council without having found some sort of public opportunity to defuse the situation, she will come into a hostile situation at Dublin, and into some difficult press questioning at her press conference at the end of the European Council. The Taoiseach will face similar questioning. If she were to be able to say something before the European Council, both she and the Taoiseach could then confine themselves to saying that the meeting of the European Council was to discuss European questions, that she and the Taoiseach had had only a brief word en marge about Anglo-Irish matters, and that she had no statement to make about those conversations beyond reaffirming that the close and continuing dialogue referred to in the Chequers communique would go forward.



4. The Prime Minister will wish to consider, in the light of this, whether, despite the air of contrivance, it would be worth going forward with an arranged Question and Answer of the kind suggested in my minute of 27 November. The text would of course need to be altered to fit the revised text of the Prime Minister's message to the Taoiseach.

5. As to the message to the Taoiseach, I should be content for the message to go forward to the Taoiseach, and I think that it would be useful that it should go, subject to one small change indicated in manuscript on the copy attached.

6. As to the draft Parliamentary Question and Answer I attach a first shot at a new version, taking account of the revised version of the message to the Taoiseach.

7. I am sending copies of this minute and of the attachments to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

ReA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

28 November 1984