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Jek

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

ANGLO/IRISH RELATIONS: NORTHERN IRELAND

Thank you for your minute of 24 September about the possible timing of an Anglo/Irish Summit.

The Prime Minister is firmly of the view that we must not postpone prorogation and that we must have a weekend between the announcement of an agreement with the Irish Government and a debate in Parliament. It follows that a Summit on 28 October would not be acceptable. It would be helpful if you would confirm this to the Irish Government. The Prime Minister, for her part, sees no reason why the Irish should not have their debate in the Dail some days before ours takes place in the Commons.

I am copying this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Charles Powell.

(CHARLES POWELL)

25 September 1985

PRIME MINISTER

ANGLO/IRISH RELATIONS: NORTHERN IRELAND

Sir Robert Armstrong reports that the Irish want to postpone the Summit till 28 October so that Parliamentary debate can follow immediately without a weekend intervening. They feel that the weekend press would stir up too much trouble if there was a gap of even a few days between the Summit and a debate.

As I recall the strong feeling in OD(I) was there must be a decent time for Members of Parliament to consider the document and hear the views of their constituents before a debate and for this purpose five or six days was the minimum necessary.

I assume you would still agree with this. There seems to me no reason why the Irish cannot have their debate before ours anyway.

C.D.P

We cannot postpone  
proposition and we must  
have a weekend between  
announcement & debate.

rob

(C.D. Powell)  
24 September, 1985

RAMAAX

Ref. A085/2430

MR POWELL

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Anglo-Irish Relations: Northern Ireland

Thank you for your minute of 23 September about a Parliamentary debate following the Anglo-Irish summit.

2. I have certainly been assuming that the Prime Minister would open the Parliamentary debate after an Anglo-Irish summit, and we will put work in hand on a draft on the basis of the timetable you suggest.

3. As to the date of an Anglo-Irish summit, when I saw Mr Nally yesterday, he said that the Taoiseach's views on dates had somewhat changed. The Taoiseach is now very anxious that there should not be a weekend intervening between the date of the summit and the date or dates of debates in the Dail and the House of Commons. He fears that, if a weekend is allowed to intervene, the Irish Sunday press will stir up trouble and there will be too many opportunities both for his opponents in Ireland and for the Unionists in Northern Ireland to stir themselves and their supporters up in ways which could be unhelpful and unparliamentary. He very much shares the wish to focus comment and position as far as possible into Parliamentary channels both in Ireland and here.

4. He has therefore rather turned away from the idea of a summit on 23 October, which is a little too late in the week for that kind of plan, and is proposing Monday 28 October for the summit itself.

5. I warned Mr Nally that this could create problems for us, because Parliament was due to be prorogued on 31 October. I did

not know whether it would be possible or whether Ministers would be willing, to ask the House of Commons to change its business for 30 October or to postpone prorogation to allow a debate on 31 October; and there would be obvious disadvantages if a debate in the House of Commons could not occur until after the end of the Debate on the Address.

6. When this was discussed earlier the possibility of a summit on Monday 28 October and a debate later that week was not entirely excluded, though it was not thought to be ideal. Certainly we were clear that Monday 28 October was the last possible date for a summit. It would be helpful in planning timetables, and in responding to Mr Nally to know whether we must exclude 28 October, or whether that is still a date which we should be prepared to contemplate.

7. 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.

*MS*

*for*

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

*Approved by Sir Robert  
and signed in his absence*

24 September 1985

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COPIED



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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

ANGLO-IRISH DISCUSSIONS; NORTHERN IRELAND

We are at present planning on the assumption of an Anglo-Irish Summit on or around 23/24 October. If successful, this would need to be followed by a parliamentary debate about 28/29 October. I assume that the Prime Minister would speak in this, indeed probably open it.

The Prime Minister has several other speeches to make at about that time, including the Debate on the Address and the Lord Mayor's Banquet. The sooner she can begin to consider a draft of the speech for the Irish debate the better. It would be very helpful if work could be put in hand on this fairly soon, in the hope that we can take a first draft with us to CHOGM on 16 October.

I am copying this minute to the Private Secretary to the Northern Ireland Secretary.

TMS

CHARLES POWELL

23 September 1985