

SECRET AND PERSONAL

BM



file

18

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS: TIMING OF THE SUMMIT

The Prime Minister has considered your minute of 9 October on the timing of a possible Anglo-Irish Summit.

The Prime Minister is firmly of the view that we cannot plan on a date before 15 November. She cannot manage the dates between 1 and 4 November suggested by Mr. Nally.

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

(C.D. Powell)
13 October 1985

TVJ

SECRET AND PERSONAL

Ref. A085/2590

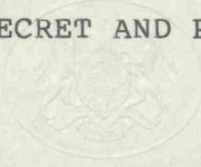
MR POWELL

Anglo-Irish Relations: Timing of Summit

I had some further discussion of this at and in the margins of my meeting with Mr Nally on 7 and 8 October.

2. I said that it would now really be impossible for the Prime Minister to meet the Taoiseach in the week beginning 21 October. Given that Parliament was to be prorogued on 31 October it would be impossible to debate the Agreement in the House of Commons before Prorogation if it was not signed before 28 October. That seemed to me to make signature before Prorogation virtually out of the question. If the Agreement was signed early in the week beginning 28 October, there would be intense pressure to postpone Prorogation, which it would be essential to avoid. The new Session would begin on 6 November, and the debate on the Address would last until 12 November. It would be difficult for the Prime Minister to be available for a meeting with the Taoiseach during that period. Hence her proposal in her message to the Taoiseach that we should think in terms of mid-November.

3. The Irish side have now injected a new element into the discussion: the fact that the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) is to have its party conference from 8 to 10 November. Mr Spring and Mr Barry said to the Secretaries of State on 7 October and Mr Nally said with even greater emphasis to me in Dublin that Irish Ministers were very anxious indeed that the Agreement should be signed before the SDLP conference. If it were not so, they feared that resolutions might be moved and passed at the conference instructing the leadership not to support an Agreement if it contained certain provisions or unless it did not contain other provisions. Mr Nally accepted

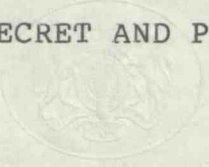


my argument for not signing before Prorogation, but urged that we should think in terms of signature sometime between 1 and 4 November, and for the Irish preferably on 4 November, so that the debate in the Dail could follow without the intervention of a weekend.

4. I said that I did not know how this would fit in with the Prime Minister's plans; I would go into the matter and come back to Mr Nally later.

5. The matter has just taken a new turn. Mr Nally rang up this afternoon to say that the Taoiseach was extremely disturbed by reports reaching him that someone at Blackpool - a junior Minister in the Northern Ireland Office or the Secretary of State's Parliamentary Private Secretary - was going round Blackpool showing copies of the draft Agreement to journalists. The source of these reports was a journalist who had been favoured with a sight of the draft Agreement in this way. The Taoiseach, who has been getting increasingly concerned that the whole process may unravel because of leaks and of positions taken by Fianna Fail in the Republic and by the unionists in Northern Ireland, is now suggesting that the Agreement should be signed very early next week (14 or 15 October) in order to pre-empt this process.

6. On the location for the meeting between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, the Taoiseach is still hankering after a venue somewhere near Shannon; but I have the impression that they have more or less accepted that it will be in Hillsborough.



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

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

9 October 1985

I shall ring Mr Nally tomorrow,
to say that Mr Gandhi's visit
makes signature next week -
and therefore this month -
impossible.

RA 9. x. 85