



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

9 November 1985

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS: NORTHERN IRELAND

The Prime Minister had a meeting this afternoon with the Northern Ireland Secretary and the Foreign Secretary to discuss a number of outstanding points about the draft Agreement on Northern Ireland. Sir Robert Armstrong was also present.

Location of the Intergovernmental Conference and the Secretariat

The Prime Minister said that she was perturbed by the tone of the Taoiseach's remarks about the location of the Intergovernmental Conference and the Secretariat in his recent message. They were indicative of the attitude the Irish Government are likely to take once the Agreement was in force. It had to be for HMG to consider and decide on matters of security. She was strongly opposed to locating the Secretariat in Stormont at the heart of the Northern Ireland Government. This would give the wrong signal politically.

The Northern Ireland Secretary agreed that location was a very significant issue which needed to be watched carefully. He saw evidence of the Irish Government trying to show that it had secured more from the Agreement than was the case. This must be resisted. He thought that a compromise could be reached on the location of the Intergovernmental Conference by agreeing in principle that its first meeting should be held in Belfast subject to the security situation following the Agreement. He agreed that it would be undesirable to have the Secretariat in Stormont. He would be looking at alternative sites on 11 November and would make a recommendation. He had in mind the purchase of a building currently occupied by the Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board. Once acquired and refurbished, this could service as offices and accommodation for the Irish members of the Secretariat.

The Foreign Secretary recalled that by stressing the security aspects of the location of the Conference and the Secretariat, we had to some extent led the Irish Government to focus on Stormont. He agreed with the Prime Minister and the Northern Ireland Secretary that this was undesirable. But it was incumbent on HMG to find an appropriate and secure location reasonably near Stormont which could serve

both as offices and as accommodation for the Irish members of the Secretariat. He would urge Mr. Barry when they met on 11 November not to press unreasonable demands on this issue.

After discussion, the Prime Minister concluded:

(i) we should tell the Irish Government that we agreed in principle to hold the first meeting of the Intergovernmental conference in Belfast subject to an assessment of security considerations at the time;

(ii) we should also inform the Irish Government that we were seeking an appropriate and secure building to provide offices and accommodation for the Irish members of the Secretariat. This would be reasonably close to Stormont. But we would not be able to provide this until the first half of 1986. We could not agree that the Secretariat should be located in Stormont itself;

(iii) until the building was ready, ad hoc arrangements would be made for such periods as members of the Secretariat needed to be in Belfast. This was likely to involve their accommodation in hotels, though it would help surmount security problems if so far as possible the Irish members were to commute from the Republic. It would have to be made clear that Stormont was not an option for temporary offices and accommodation.

(iv) the Northern Ireland Secretary would consider further where in Belfast the Intergovernmental Conference would meet. One option would be the building acquired for the Secretariat.

These points should be taken into account in preparing a reply to the Taoiseach's message, which should issue before Sir Robert Armstrong's next meeting with Mr. Nally on 12 November.

#### Role of the Secretariat

It was agreed to stress once again to the Irish Government our views on the limited role of the Secretariat; also that the normal point of contact for the Irish Secretary would be his British opposite number and that he did not have an automatic right of access to senior Northern Ireland Office officials. Equally, the existence of the Secretariat and the Intergovernmental Conference should not inhibit normal working contacts between British Ministers and senior officials and their Irish opposite numbers.

#### Membership of the Secretariat

It was noted that the Irish Government intended to appoint Mr. Lillis as the Irish member of the Secretariat with the rank of Deputy Secretary. We should have preferred to see the Secretariat operate at a lower level. But this had to be balanced against the need for our Secretary to be

somebody capable of standing up to Mr. Lillis. This pointed towards nomination of Mr. Elliott who was serving as an Under Secretary in the Northern Ireland Office.

Meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference

It was agreed that the Irish wish for two meetings before Christmas was unrealistic. The Foreign Secretary would point this out to Mr. Barry.

Border Security

It was agreed that discussions with the Irish Government could not be taken further at this stage. They understood that we would be exerting strong pressure on them through the Intergovernmental Conference for improved border security.

European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism

It was noted that the Irish Attorney General seemed likely to advise the Irish Government against signing the Convention at this stage because of the risk of challenge in the Courts. The wording already negotiated for the communique would thus stand.

Arrangements for the Anglo-Irish Summit

It was agreed that we should insist upon RAF Aldergrove as the site for the Summit. The delegation should be small. The programme should comprise a meeting followed immediately by signature of the Agreement and a joint press conference, with lunch thereafter.

Briefing of Party Leaders

It was noted that the Prime Minister would brief the Westminster Party leaders on Privy Council terms on the evening of 14 November. It was agreed that a briefing on these terms should also be offered to Mr. Molyneux, although he was quite likely to decline it. The Northern Ireland Party leaders should be offered a briefing after conclusion of the Agreement by the Northern Ireland Secretary

Briefing of the Speaker

It was noted that Mr. Enoch Powell was likely to take a very early opportunity to ask the Speaker to rule on the constitutionality of the Agreement. Steps would need to be taken to ensure that the Clerk of the House was in a position to provide the Speaker with advice.

Meetings in the United States

Sir Robert Armstrong reported briefly on his meetings in Washington. The United States was unlikely to be in a position to make any firm offer of financial support this side of Christmas. He would need to inform the US

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Administration very shortly beforehand of the precise date on which the Agreement would be signed.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretary to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

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