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Ref. A085/2891

PRIME MINISTER

CDP  
11/11Anglo-Irish Relations: Northern Ireland

At your meeting on 9 November I was instructed to prepare a draft of a message for you to send to the Taoiseach in reply to his message of 7 November, conveying the conclusions and decisions reached at the meeting.

- 2. The attached draft has been agreed with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has told me that Mr Scott has personally inspected the building referred to in paragraph 9, and is satisfied that it would be very well suited to the purpose. It stands in its own grounds, bounded on one side by Belfast Lough and on another side by a RUC barracks. It is thus relatively easy to protect; and the barracks provide somewhere for helicopters to land, if need be. This looks like a good solution.
3. I have put one sentence in square brackets at the beginning of paragraph 7. This sentence was proposed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. It seems to me unnecessarily grudging to insist upon our preference to hold the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference elsewhere than Belfast, since we are actually agreeing to ~~do so~~ <sup>hold it there</sup>. I can see, however, that the inclusion of those words makes it clear that we are in effect saying to the Taoiseach: "on your own heads be it, if something terrible happens".
4. I detect some signs of "first-night nerves" on the Irish side, and it is with that thought in mind that I have included the last paragraph of the message, which could help to have a steadying effect, and at the same time indicates the British Government's determination to make a success of the agreement.



5. The Irish have indicated that it would be helpful if they could have your reply this evening, no doubt with a view to their Cabinet meeting tomorrow. But I have made it clear to them that your first priority must be your speech this evening.

6. I am sending copies of this minute and of the draft to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

11 November 1985

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

WHITEHALL

LONDON SW1A 2AZ

Michael Stark Esq  
PS/Sir Robert Armstrong  
Cabinet Office  
70 Whitehall  
London SW1

// November 1985

*Dear Mr Stark*

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS:NORTHERN IRELAND

We spoke earlier about Sir Robert's letter of today's date to Jim Daniell. The Secretary of State will not be available to consider the draft response until 3.30pm today but in the mean-  
... time I attach a suggested re-write of paragraphs 2,7,9 and 10 which officials will be recommending to the Secretary of State this afternoon. We will telephone you as soon as Mr King has had an opportunity to consider the papers.

I am copying this to Charles Powell and Len Appleyard.

*Yours sincerely*

*Norman Fowler*

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PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S DRAFT MESSAGE TO THE  
TAOISEACH

2. I am glad that at the meeting that Dick Spring and Peter Barry had with Geoffrey/<sup>Howe</sup>and Tom King they were able to reach a clear understanding on the matter of security co-operation between us. It is important in its own right and as you know, it is one of the major selling points with the Unionists that we should be able to say that the agreement provides the basis for effective and sustained co-operation between us in combatting terrorism, particularly along the border.
7. Second, we agree that the first meeting of the Conference should be held in Belfast, probably about a fortnight after the exchange of notifications has brought the agreement into effect. We would have to come back to you on this if, after the agreement is signed, the reaction to it were to be much worse than we at present expect. We shall plan for and expect the meeting to be held in Belfast.
9. We are therefore looking as a matter of urgency for a government building reasonably near Stormont for which we can provide the necessary security. Indeed, we think we have identified a building reasonably near Stormont which will provide office accommodation for both sides of the Secretariat, and possibly residential accommodation for the Irish side. Ministerial meetings would probably have to be held at Stormont; but sub-committees might meet in the secretariat building. The building will not be available for some weeks and would require adaptation for residential purposes. It is at present on lease and we may have to negotiate purchase. Subject to these points, it seems as if it would be very well suited for our needs. It would provide better than adequate accommodation at a proper standard for the Conference and its Secretariat in conditions which can be made reasonably secure; and it would facilitate rapid and easy communication between the two secretaries who will be the normal channel of contact, as well as reasonable proximity to the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland departments when it is necessary for other officials to be involved. Representatives of the two sides will wish to examine how best the building could be adapted; but this cannot

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be done in advance of the agreement without breaching confidentiality.

10. Until the building can be ready, we shall have to make the best temporary arrangements we can. I hope that you will be able during this time to keep to an absolute minimum the number of officials who need to be in Belfast on a continuing basis, even if that means people travelling to and from Dublin more than is really convenient. It may well be that anybody who stays overnight will have to be put up in a hotel (as many of our own people were in the early months of direct rule and still are when making short visits). We should of course be responsible for their protection. On that basis I am sure that we should be able to find temporary office accommodation, from the time of the first meeting of the Conference, to enable the Secretariat to serve the conference effectively and do what is necessary, until the long-term accommodation is available and ready.

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