



CC B. U.P.

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Ref. A085/2934

PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister.
This is the brief
for your meeting
with the Taoiseach.
e.p.

Anglo-Irish Summit: Discussion with the Taoiseach

14/xi

I suggest that there is no need, in your tête-à-tête with the Taoiseach or in the larger meeting following it, for detailed discussion of the substance of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Secretariat

2. You could ask the Taoiseach about the impressions of the official from the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs who on 13 November visited the house in Belfast selected for the Secretariat. The Northern Ireland Office officials who accompanied the visitor from Dublin thought that he was convinced that the building would be suitable. Discussion of this matter would give you the opportunity to repeat the point in your message to the Taoiseach of 11 November that, if reactions in Northern Ireland to the Agreement are much worse than expected, we may have to return to the questions of the location of the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference and the location of the Secretariat in its early days.

Parliament

3. You could also have a word with the Taoiseach about plans for debates on the Agreement in Parliament. Our latest news about the Dail is that it is likely to debate the Agreement on 19 and 20 November and perhaps also on 21 November. Your statement in the House is scheduled for 18 November. The debate in the House is scheduled for the week beginning 25 November, with the debate in the Lords following immediately afterwards. We



would hope to exchange notifications of acceptance of the Agreement with the Irish on the first working day after the conclusion of the House of Lords debate.

Press Conference

4. The main subject for your discussion with the Taoiseach, I suggest, will be the handling of the press conference following the Summit and more generally the presentation of the Agreement. The Irish Government have displayed nervousness that the two Governments could present the Agreement in divergent ways. You could tell the Taoiseach that you plan a balanced presentation, giving prominence to two main features of the Agreement: Article 1 about the status of Northern Ireland and the Articles about the establishment of the Intergovernmental Conference. You would of course say that there was no derogation from sovereignty and that the decisions and administration of government would remain with the United Kingdom north of the border and the Government of the Irish Republic south of the border; but you would also bring out that the two sides have undertaken in the Agreement to make determined efforts to resolve differences. You would want to stress the importance of the Irish Government's commitment to effective and sustained co-operation in security, particularly along the border; and to their intention to accede to the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism. More generally, you would plan to stress that the Agreement is aimed at promoting peace, stability and reconciliation between the two traditions in Northern Ireland; and that it should also help greatly to develop our bilateral relations, notably through enhanced co-operation on security matters. You would plan also to bring out our hope that the Agreement would improve the prospects for devolved government in the future.



5. The Taoiseach will probably wish to discuss, in particular, the handling of questions about the status of Northern Ireland.

I attach as Annex A the two answers which were devised in my last meeting with Mr Nally. The Taoiseach is also likely to ask whether you would be willing in public presentation to alter somewhat the order of the points about mixed courts in your message to him of 4 October. The relevant passage of that message is at Annex B. He may ask you not to say in public that you had "made our position clear to the Taoiseach in the negotiations", since that might invite questions about what the Taoiseach had conveyed to you during the negotiations.

6. I also attach as Annex C the paper of possible Questions and Answers which Mr Mallaby submitted on 7 November. The Taoiseach might wish to discuss one or two of the proposed Answers, notably the one (No 2 in the material as arranged by Mr Mallaby) on whether the Irish role in the Intergovernmental Conference will be merely "consultative".

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

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

14 November 1985

Possible Answers to Questions about the
Status of Northern Ireland

1. Question to
the Prime
Minister

Article 1 is ambiguous/imprecise about the status
of Northern Ireland, says less than the Chequers
Communique, etc. What does it mean?

Answer

Of course the two Governments approach this aspect of the matter from differing historical perceptions and from within differing constitutional frameworks. The Agreement does not change that.

The position is clear. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom.

What Article 1 does is to look to the future and set out - for the first time in a binding international agreement - what is common ground between us: that there will be no change in the present status of Northern Ireland without the freely given consent of the majority of its inhabitants; and that both Governments recognise that such consent does not at present exist.

2. Question to
the Taoiseach

Do you agree with the Prime Minister?

Answer

As the Prime Minister has said, the two Governments approach this matter from differing historical perceptions and from within differing constitutional frameworks, and the Agreement does not change that.

It is of course a fact that Ireland is not united politically and that the British Government is responsible for the government of Northern Ireland.

What is important is what we have now agreed about the future.

Extract from the Prime Minister's message to the Taoiseach of
4 October 1985

"We have all along made it clear to you that we could go no further than undertaking to consider the possibility of mixed courts. We remain prepared to undertake to consider the possibility, but in all honesty it has to be without commitment, since, though we do not exclude the possibility of mixed courts being feasible and acceptable at some future time, we cannot see any easy or early way round or through the political and other difficulties which would be involved."

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