

SUBJECT
cc Master.

10 DOWNING STREET

16 January 1985

From the Private Secretary

Dear An,

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS: NORTHERN IRELAND

The Prime Minister held a meeting at 10 Downing Street this morning to consider the way forward in discussions with the Irish Government on Northern Ireland. The Foreign Secretary and the Northern Ireland Secretary took part. Sir Robert Armstrong, Mr. Andrew, Mr. Goodall, Mr. Cartledge and Sir Philip Woodfield were also present.

Anglo-Irish Discussions on Northern Ireland

The Prime Minister expressed concern at evidence that the Irish Government continued to harbour unrealistic expectations from the next Anglo-Irish Summit. In resumed discussions with them, we must make very clear that we could not agree to many of the proposals which they had made at the Chequers Summit. She was worried by a tendency on the part of the Republic to treat security co-operation as a lever for obtaining their political objectives in the North.

The Northern Ireland Secretary said that a weakness in HMG's position was that we had not yet put forward any formal proposals. Sir Robert Armstrong's minute of 11 January sketched out two models as a basis for continuing discussions with the Irish Government. He thought that Model A would have positive advantages for Northern Ireland while offering enough to the Republic to make it possible to continue a dialogue. This in turn would be helpful vis-a-vis in the United States. Model A should not be regarded as rigid: but as a starting point for reasonable discussion.

The Foreign Secretary said that it was important that HMG should not leave itself open to the accusation that it had not searched exhaustively for a settlement. If there were to be a breakdown of talks with the Republic without such a search having been completed, the situation in the North would deteriorate, we should face difficulties with the United States, and Northern Ireland would continue to be a massive financial drain with no prospect of relief. The fact was that the Irish Government would not accept co-operation on security matters alone. It was a political necessity for them to be able to have a wider consultative role. He did not recommend Model B as it stood. Equally he was not sure that Model A was a sufficient basis for

progress.

In discussion, it was acknowledged that Model B would create major difficulties with the Unionists which would be only slightly assuaged by changes to Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution (always supposing that the Irish Government could deliver these in a referendum, about which considerable doubt was expressed). While Model A would provoke a row with the Unionists, the difficulties would be manageable. In any event, many of the steps proposed in Model A were desirable in their own right. If the Irish Government chose to accept it, they could present it publicly as a considerable breakthrough. Against this, it was recognised that there was a risk of the Irish Government flatly rejecting Model A and breaking off the dialogue. This pointed to trying to make Model A somewhat more attractive to them.

Summing up this part of the discussion, the Prime Minister said that Model A should be improved presentationally to make it more attractive to the Republic and more suitable as a negotiating document. For instance, the substance of paragraph 2 of Model B could be built into Model A, and it should be made clear that the proposed Standing Committee of the Anglo-Irish Inter-Governmental Council would deal not just with security matters but with sensitive human rights issues of concern to the nationalist population. Clearly the Irish Government would not accept such proposals immediately but they might grow in attraction. We should not, in putting forward Model A, suggest that we would expect the Irish Government to drop a referendum on their Constitution. It was for them to make that judgement. The revised version should be put to the Irish Government at the talks with Mr. Nally planned for next week, and could be pursued when the Foreign Secretary and Northern Ireland Secretary met Mr. Barry in early February.

Discussions with Northern Ireland Political Parties

The Northern Ireland Secretary said that the process of persuading the parties to talk to each other was a slow one and could not be rushed. He might in due course propose the appointment of an intermediary to carry out contacts between them. But the time was not yet ripe for this. The Prime Minister recalled that talks with the Northern Ireland parties on devolution had been an essential element in the Chequers Summit communique and must be seen to proceed in parallel with talks with the Irish Government. The Northern Ireland parties must be kept up to the mark.

Anglo/Irish Summit

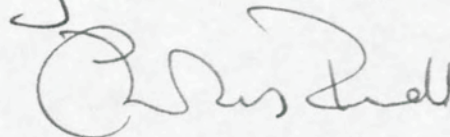
The Prime Minister said that she did not see any point at present in a further Summit which would only raise expectations which could not be fulfilled. It was better to continue talks behind the scenes and see what progress could be made before setting a date. It was also important to make progress with the Northern Ireland parties before another Summit. She would have a further meeting with the

Taoiseach in the margins of the European Council in Brussels on 29/30 March to review progress.

Meeting with John Hume, M.P.

It was agreed that at the Prime Minister's meeting with Mr. Hume on 17 January she would hear him out, explain the limits within which we could talk of an Anglo/Irish dimension but point out there was much useful work to be done within those limits, and urge him to take an active part in discussions with the other parties in the Province.

I am copying this letter to Neil Ward (Northern Ireland Office) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours sincerely,


CHARLES POWELL

Len Appleyard, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.