

MR COLES

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ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS

I spoke to Mr. Dermot Nally in the margins of the meeting of the European Council at Brussels on Monday, 19 March at 3.45 pm.

He asked when it would be convenient for the Prime Minister to talk to the Taoiseach. I said that the Prime Minister was anxious to keep free as much time as possible on the morning of Tuesday, 20 March to prepare herself for the day's proceedings in the European Council, and was likely therefore to have her conversation with the Taoiseach in the course of their informal gatherings, perhaps at dinner time this evening. I supposed that at this stage the Taoiseach would not want to do much more than give her a preliminary reaction to the ideas which I had recently put to Mr. Nally, and that the next stage on that was likely to be a second round of discussions between us.

Mr. Nally confirmed that that was likely to be the Taoiseach's position on those matters, although he would also want to give the Prime Minister some account of where the proceedings on the Forum for a New Ireland now stood. The present expectation still was that the report of the Forum would be published in the second week of April, and there was no reason to expect any surprises on its contents, though that could still change. I said that, if the report talked about "joint authority", it might be helpful if it could distinguish "joint authority" from "joint responsibility" as clearly as possible.

Mr. Nally said that, with the European Elections coming in June, and the 12 July and 12 August dates coming up, the Irish Government were likely to want to play the Forum report long and low: they would not want it to feature strongly in the European Elections. Thus it seemed unlikely that the time would be ripe for a further bilateral summit between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach before the autumn. Nonetheless the Taoiseach attached importance

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to being able to talk to the Prime Minister about Anglo-Irish matters in the margins of this meeting of the European Council and next June's meeting. He would be coming to London to give a lecture on Wednesday, 6 June. I said that might be a very difficult date for the Prime Minister; not only was it very shortly before the European Elections, but it was the day before the London Economic Summit. Mr. Nally said that the Taoiseach might also be coming to London for a function at the Inner (or Middle) Temple on 26 June; that might provide another occasion on which he could meet the Prime Minister for an informal exchange.

I am sending copies of this minute to Brian Fall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and to Derek Hill (Northern Ireland Office).

REA

19 March, 1984

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