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cc Thatcher
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 Minister
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 Secretary
 Mr. Kelly
 Mr. Wood
 Mr. Dingley

AIN.

SECRET

6 March 1985

DISCUSSION WITH CHARLES POWELL, PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE PRIME MINISTER

Dear Assistant Secretary,

I had a short discussion with Charles Powell at a dinner party last night.

He confirmed that - as you already know - the Prime Minister is to have a meeting on Friday next to discuss a revised British paper to be given to us. He said that Mrs. Thatcher had looked at a draft "about ten days ago" but had not had time to give it serious consideration at that stage. I understood that Friday's discussion would be more extended and would be directed to approval of a text.

I mentioned the interest on our side in a Ministerial level meeting soon. He was aware of this and virtually confirmed that Sir Geoffrey Howe and Douglas Hurd are agreeable in principle to go over to Dublin. He did not know however whether it had gone beyond that to the stage of fixing dates. I asked if the Prime Minister has agreed. He gave me to understand that she has not (yet ?) been consulted but he said that in his view "they should simply get on with it" (ie without asking her first). (Personally I am inclined to doubt if they would do that. I should imagine that it is much more likely that the possibility of such a trip to Dublin by the two Ministers will be discussed at the meeting with Mrs. Thatcher on Friday next and that the merits of such a meeting - which now seem to be accepted on the British side will be weighed against the

expectations which might be aroused by a visit to Dublin, at this time, by the two Ministers together).

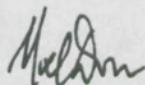
Powell assumes that the substantive Summit is now certain to be deferred for some months. I mentioned the Taoiseach's visit to London for a speaking engagement on 22 March but said that we had not, so far as I knew, proposed a meeting with the Prime Minister for that occasion in view of the probable meeting in Brussels a week later.

Powell thought that it might have been difficult in any case to set up a meeting to suit both on the occasion of the Taoiseach's London visit but he was fully seized of the question of a meeting in Brussels en marge of the European Council. I said I thought that, if there was talk of deferring the full Summit it would seem the more necessary to have a more substantive discussion at the Brussels meeting. He agreed fully with this and thought the Prime Minister would be glad of the opportunity to talk to the Taoiseach.

I wondered how much time should be allowed for the meeting? Powell talked of "up to an hour". We both noted that the past practice has been not to make a detailed arrangement for a meeting in advance but rather to "play it by ear" on the spot. Something would obviously depend on the business of the European Council itself and this - as always - was likely to be contentious. However he mentioned Saturday morning as good possibility for the bilateral meeting, and spoke also of the possibility that the Prime Minister could arrive a bit early.

I would take all of this as an indication of an openness on the British side to a reasonably substantive meeting in Brussels though the details, timing etc. would be left, in accordance with past practice, to Messrs. Nally and Armstrong to work out on the spot

Yours sincerely,



Noel Dorr (Ambassador)

Mr. Michael Lillis
Asst. Sec.
DFA
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