



CCB

CONFIDENTIAL

Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

31 July 1992

London SW1A 2AH

Dear Stephen,

NEXT ANGLO-IRISH SUMMIT MEETING

- will attach i/Presd.

Thank you for your letter of 27 June to William Fittall, which concluded that we should consider dates for the next in the series of six-monthly bilateral summits between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach. This reply has been agreed with the NIO. HM Ambassador in Dublin has been consulted.

The Northern Ireland Political Development Talks will be the main agenda item for the next summit. If they have successfully concluded, mutual congratulations will be in order and the way forward charted; if they are continuing, a political push might be right; if they have broken down, mutual reassurance will be required.

In some circumstances the timing of a summit may need to be fixed by developments in the Talks. But there is at present no evident need for an early summit arising from the talks. Various Irish domestic preoccupations are also relevant. The Taoiseach is due to give evidence at the Irish Beef Tribunal after it resumes in September. This will be a difficult time for him and the Irish Government. It would be desirable to have this out of the way before a meeting, but no date for the tribunal hearing has been

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL



fixed. The highly controversial referendum on abortion could well be scheduled for late November. Either or both of these events could conceivably bring the Taoiseach to call an early general election.

The Prime Minister will probably wish to pay a first visit since the election to Northern Ireland before going to Dublin.

If the summit was to be a part of the pre Edinburgh round it would need to be in November, but the talks agenda and the complication of an Irish abortion referendum in November are an argument for a visit to Dublin earlier, perhaps in the second half of October. The Taoiseach could then be invited to London for a short discussion on EC questions the following month.

These considerations point towards no firm decision on the timing of a Summit until the autumn.

The case for combining talks with a speech must depend in part on how the Talks progress. We do not expect any difficulty in finding a suitable platform. There might be a strong argument for giving first refusal to the Institute of Directors who have already made overtures to the Prime Minister.

In case the Prime Minister might be able to fit in a slightly longer visit, our Ambassador has suggested that there would be an opportunity for the Prime Minister, and perhaps Mrs Major, to combine the talks in Dublin with attendance at the first evening performance of Mascagni's "Il Piccolo Marat" at the Wexford Opera Festival on Thursday 22 October. The Taoiseach has already agreed to be there and the Wexford Festival Director has asked if the Prime Minister would also like to attend. The following day could then be devoted to the Summit meeting, to be followed by a luncheon, possibly arranged by the Irish Institute of

CONFIDENTIAL



CONFIDENTIAL

Directors, at which the Prime Minister would speak. This outline has not yet been floated even tentatively with the Irish. If the Prime Minister is attracted by this possibility, we would submit a detailed programme before consulting them.

I am copying this letter to William Fittall (Northern Ireland Office) and Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever,
Christopher Prentice.*

(C N R Prentice)
Private Secretary

J S Wall Esq
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

Ireland: MAgp with

Taouseach Pt 23